METRO / A25

National history researcher gets 20 years for theft/sale of 2,000 Katipunan papers

NEWS / A2

Comelec loses reformist, independent Commissioner Romeo Brawner; 72

WORLD / A30

Nepal's 240-year-old monarchy abolished; republic declared

ENTERTAINMENT / H1

Welcome to the house that komiks, Carlo J and his Donna V built

RP economic growth slows to 5.2% in Q1

By Michelle V. Remo

DRAGGED DOWN BY SOARING FUEL AND commodity prices, the Philippine economy slowed down to an annual growth of 5.2 percent in the first quarter.

"After four quarters of pleasantly surprising performance, the Philippine economy succumbed to rising oil prices.

RP ECONOMIC A10

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Friday, May 30, 2008 ★★ 17 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 175 P10 website: www.inquirer.net

Ex-Bush press secretary bashes president in book

WASHINGTON—IN A SHOCKING TURNabout, the press secretary most known for defending President George W. Bush on Iraq, Katrina and a host of other controversial issues produced a memoir damning of his old boss on nearly every level—from too much secrecy to a less-than-honest telling of the war to a lack of personal

BUSH A11

GMA-Bush summit set

SCENE OF THE CRIME OPERATION Bomb experts sift through the ruins to gather evidence at the blast site across from Edwin Andrews Air Base in Zamboanga City. Most of the casualties were relatives of soldiers waiting to board a military transport plane. The bomb was believed to have been set off by mobile phone. The terrorist act mars the visit of US envoy Kristie Kenney to Pagadian City on Thursday. AUTHOR

White House readies red carpet for US ally

By Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO AND US President George W. Bush will meet for the last time as leaders of their nations when she goes to Washington and New York next month for a working visit, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye announced yesterday.

Bunye said Ms Arroyo's packed schedule on June 23-29 would include meetings with Bush, other key US government officials, members of the US Congress, Filipino war veterans, leaders and members of the Filipino-American community, business leaders, investors and environmental groups.

During her visit, Ms Arroyo will also push the candidacy of Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, her staunch political ally, for a seat in the International Court of Justice.

Bush is to step down in January 2009, and Ms Arroyo completes her term in 2010.

The two leaders last met on Sept. 8, 2007, at the opening of the 2007 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit at the Sydney Opera House in Australia.

Ms Arroyo traveled to the United States that same month to attend the Clinton Initiative Forum on Sept. 26 and the United Nations General Assembly on Sept. 28.

The meeting between the Philippine and US leaders was "mutually discussed and agreed [upon]," according to Bunye.

"In Washington, President Bush will welcome President Arroyo to the White House for discussions on issues of great interest to the Philippines and the United States, particularly on ways to further strengthen our long-standing and historic bilateral relations," Bunye said.

He said Ms Arroyo was expected to exchange views with Bush "on a broad range of issues, including food security, protection of the environment, the Philippine defense reform program, counterterrorism, nonproliferation, Asean's community building, human rights, Burma

GMA-BUSH A10

Zambo bombing kills 2, wounds 23

By Julie Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

PAGADIAN CITY—A BOMB went off in a building across from Edwin Andrews Air Base in Zamboanga City at around 10 a.m. yesterday, just as President Macapagal-Arroyo was on her way to Tawi-Tawi and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney was visiting Zamboanga del Sur.

City information officer Sheila Governbino said a man and a woman were confirmed dead and 23 others injured in the explosion that ripped through the first floor of the Air Wing Mutual Savings and Loan Association (AWMSLAI) building in Barangay Sto. Maria. The building houses the offices of the US-funded Alliance for Mindanao Off-Grid Renewable Energy (Amore) and of Zamboanga Rep. Ma. Isabel Climaco.

Police authorities linked Moro rebels to the bomb attack and announced that a man had been arrested. The man's identity was withheld.

Governbino identified those killed as Eduardo Tahir of Catubangan District in Zamboanga City and Ayesha Bonsiot of Margosatubig, Zamboanga del Sur.

Among those hurt were two members of Climaco's staff and four Amore engineers, all Filipinos.

The others were civilians waiting to hitch a ride on a C-130 cargo plane that was to take off from the base, Col. Darwin Guerra, commander of Task Force Zamboanga, told the Inquirer in Manila by phone. He balked reports that there were three fatalities.

Despite the bomb attack, Ms Arroyo pushed ahead with her

ZAMBO A10

Group files P889-M suit against Meralco over customer deposits

By Lelia B. Salamerin and Abigail L. Ho

MANILA ELECTRIC CO.'S (Meralco) woes has struck again.

The group of consumers at the forefront of a campaign against shenanigans in the power sector for years beat Mission Garcia on the grounds when it filed a criminal case yesterday against Meralco.

The complaint of the National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms (Nasecore) was for "syndicated estafa" against the Meralco board led by its chair, Manuel Lopez, for allegedly illegally declaring as income P889 million in consumers' money.

The amount represented part of the interest earned by the meter and bill deposits—collectively known as "consumers deposits"—of Meralco subscribers that were estimated to have reached about P21 billion.

The case was lodged with the Department of Justice for investigation to determine whether it warranted prosecution in court.

Nasecore's Fernando Ilagan told reporters the initiative had nothing to do with Garcia, head of the Government Service Insurance System, who has threatened to bring criminal charges against Meralco in an attempt to bring down high electricity rates.

In its complaint, Nasecore

GROUP FILES A11

2 highly charged lawmakers clash

By Norman Bordadora

THE LOWLITES OF TWO LAWmakers came to the fore at the hearing on the high power rates of Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) that the House committee on energy conducted yesterday.

Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Villa-

3 MORE A10 A11

Inquirer still No. 1 in readership

By Kaze Pedroza
Inquirer Research

THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INquirer remains at the top.

The business is still the Filipinos' English newspaper of choice nationwide, commanding an average readership of 668,221 per issue on weekdays, according to the latest survey results released by Synovate.

The Philippine Star comes in second with a nationwide weekday readership of 570,559 per issue and the Manila Bulletin third with 518,184.

Synovate, the market research arm of Aegis Group Plc., a marketing services firm based in London, also said that 32 percent of 70-plus between 15 and 64 years old read newspapers while 28 percent read magazines.

Compared to the national average, magazines and newspapers enjoyed higher readership in the Greater Manila area (GMA), according to the survey. Magazine readership in the area was at 39 percent and that of newspapers at 43 percent.

INQUIRER A10

Meralco admits charging 11% systems loss

By Norman Bordadora and Abigail L. Ho

AFTER HEMMING AND HAWING, MANILA Electric Co. admitted yesterday that it was charging residential consumers up to 11 percent of its systems loss.

Still, Roberto Atienzaza, Meralco first vice president for customer services, said that the application of the losses—mainly from pilferage and problems of friction in the delivery of electricity from generators to end-users—was well within the allowable limit of 9.5 percent.

He said this was because it was being "averaged" among all customers, including residential and industrial power users.

Atienzaza's admission came during the House committee on energy hearing, prompting Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Villafuerte to announce that he would seek a P50-billion refund from Meralco.

Villafuerte claimed that Meralco was actually charging residential and commercial consumers 14.4 percent of systems loss while those in industrial areas, 7 percent.

First Gas executives also told the hearing that Meralco paid the power producer for undelivered electricity, an admission that Villafuerte took as a confirmation of his earlier allegation that First Gas got P13 billion for "ghost deliveries" to Meralco.

But Richard Tantoco, First Gas executive vice president, informed that the transactions adhered to in 2000 to 2001 were

MERALCO A11

HOT Rep. Luis Villafuerte (right) fires away at Richard Tantoco (left), EVP of First Gas.

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: "In some cases, all expenses paid, ready to study class with limited exposure to Mediterranean ready to emphasize morning

Manila	Partly cloudy	Cebu	Partly cloudy
Baguio	Partly cloudy	Davao	Partly cloudy
Cagayan	Partly cloudy	Iloilo	Partly cloudy
Legaspi	Partly cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly cloudy
Tacloban	Partly cloudy	San Jose	Partly cloudy
Puerto Princesa	Partly cloudy	Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy

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Second
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EZ2 SIX ONE/7

25 2 | 8 4 9 9 6 6

SUERTRES

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5 7 6

SUPERLOTTO 6/49

15 20 21 31 35 48

P140,253,552.00

Poll commissioner Brawner dies

By Jeannette I. Andrade and Nikko Dizon

"I'M READY TO GO HOME."

Election Commissioner Romeo Brawner eerily uttered the words to his wife Leonora Fe from his bed at St. Luke's Medical Center yesterday morning mere hours before he expired from a heart attack. He was 72.

Brawner had been at St. Luke's since Monday the last complained of chest pains accompanying fever an overseas trip last week and had himself confined for an overnight checkup. At around 9:30 a.m. Thursday, doctors pronounced him dead from massive coronary failure.

His son, Atty. spokesperson Lt. Col. Romeo Brawner Jr. told the reporters his father did not have heart problems but had lately experienced chest pains that he ignored.

"He was in Sri Lanka for 10 days to observe the election there. When he returned, he said he felt pain in his chest. But he had a high tolerance for pain so he did not mind what he was feeling," the younger Brawner said.

He said days upon arriving from Sri Lanka, his father went home to Baguio City over the weekend, something he did on a weekly basis.

He said it was his mother who insisted his father go to St. Luke's, which he did on Monday.

BRAWNER

'Not too good...'

What the last results were both, "they were not too good..." the younger Brawner said. "It was alarming, and the doctors said it was already out of the ordinary."

He said the doctors advised his father to remain in the hospital. On Tuesday and Wednesday, however, the family noted an improvement in his father's appearance, the son said.

On Thursday between 8 and 9:30 a.m., Brawner woke up, turned to his wife and said excitedly, "I'm ready to go home," the son said.

Brawner then rose from his hospital bed to go to the bathroom but collapsed. He was brought to the intensive coronary care unit where doctors tried to revive him. He was resuscitated for a short time but succumbed to coronary failure.

Brawner's cremation were taken to the Commission on Elections office in Intramuros, Manila, last night where a necrological service was to be held. They will then be brought to the Court of Appeals in Pedro Diaza before being ambled to Baguio City on Saturday, interment has been set for Tuesday.

Before he was appointed to the Comelec, Brawner was Presiding Justice of the Court of Appeals. He was born in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya, on Sept. 17, 1935. He had five children.

Brawner was named to the Comelec seat vacated by Virgilio Garcillano, the commissioner who became embroiled in the infamous "Hello Garci" scandal that dragged President Macapagal-Arroyo and several military generals in an election fraud controversy.

He served in Comelec first in acting capacity from February to March 2006 and retired Justice Ang Mel-appointed office in March.

Brawner's death brings to three the number of vacancies in the Comelec.

Over 40 years in gov't

Brawner's government career spanned more than four decades, 30 years of them in the judiciary.

A graduate of the University of the Philippines College of Law, he became a Regional Trial Court judge in Baguio City in 1975, and later in La Trinidad, Benguet, and Pangasinan.

He was appointed Court of Appeals Associate Justice in 1995 and Presiding Justice in January 2005.

On July 6, 2003, President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed him to a seven-year term in the Comelec that was to end on July 2, 2011.

Media yesterday expressed the Comelec's grief over Brawner's death, saying the electoral body would carry on as how it would without him.

"While we in Comelec mourn the commissioner's untimely demise, we believe the most fitting tribute we could give him is to ensure the coming ARMM [Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao] elections will be peaceful and credible," he said.

GMA condoles

President Arroyo also extended her sympathies to Brawner's family.

"The President and Commissioner Brawner is a great loss to our electoral system," said Press Secretary and presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye.

With the ARMM election not too far away, Bunye said he was sure Brawner's replacement would be named soon.

"This will be announced once the President has made a decision," he told reporters.

Election lawyers Leila de Lima and George Garcia agreed that Brawner's demise was a "big loss to the Comelec."

"He was actually the most senior and insightful among the current members," said De Lima, recently appointed Commission on Human Rights chair, in a text message.

Garcia said Brawner brought "integrity and honesty" to public service.

Argued with Abalos

Election lawyer Alex Poblador said Brawner was one of the commissioners who earned his respect.

Brawn told the bureau bosses and former Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos often argued behind closed doors, especially during last year's senatorial election.

Polish Parliest Council he responsible Voting national chair Sinaterna de Villa said, "The loss of Commissioner Brawner weighs heavily on election stakeholders and the nation," at a time the Comelec "is moving with determination to automate the elections."

Model judge

In La Trinidad, court employees remembered Brawner as a model judge who knew how to manage his side well.

Lawyer Norma Lacero-Carreon, RTC clerk of court, said Brawner inspired government employees to live their roles as public servants.

"At first, we did not believe the news [of his death] since he looked healthy the last time he visited us," Carreon said.

In Baguio, officials have started planning the memorial rites for Brawner. Brawner's family was from Kiangan, Ifugao, but he considered a home in Baguio from the time he studied there.

Brawner's wife, Leonora, is a retired UP Baguio physical education professor. Fifth reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Beverly T. Santiago, Manila, and Delmar Cariño and Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

6 OUT OF 10

PEOPLE, HOMES, OFFICES, BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS ARE COMFORTABLY COOLED BY A CARRIER.

Caridad O. Velasco; 85

CARIDAD OLAÑO VDA. DE VELASCO DIED on Wednesday at the age of 85.

A retired public school teacher, she is survived by her seven children and their spouses—Flor and Bong, Jesusito and Linda, Celso and Gee, Noel Allan and Bye, Reuel and Ficky, Saul, Elbee and Gogging; grandchildren Michael, Michelle, Jessielyn and Mark, Anska, Shiloe, Bernice Joseph and Annabel, Katrina and Gerry; Apol, Adlyanna Rae, Ma. Faye Adelaine, Jethro, Jericho and Carric; great grandchildren Joseph Emmanuel, Marco and Kaorrina Celeste; nephews and nieces.

Her remains lie at the Velasco family's ancestral home in Palo, Leyte. Interment will be on June 14 at the Palo cemetery after a consolidated Mass at the Palo Metropolitan Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Palo.

'Raped' Pinay back from Saudi, recants tale

A FILIPINO DOMESTIC HELPER who claimed to have been held hostage by her employers and raped by four men in Al-Qatif, Saudi Arabia last May 19 is back in the country and recanted her story.

The Department of Foreign Affairs did not name the overseas Filipino worker but said that in a statement dated May 26, 2008, she swore that the allegations were fabricated and were products of her "imagination."

The OFW who arrived last Wednesday said she made the allegations to facilitate her immediate repatriation to the Philippines.

The OFW also acknowledged that she had received full payment of the salaries owed her amounting to 6,700 riyals, and thanked the Philippine embassy in Saudi Arabia for its assistance.

According to the DFA, Philippine ambassador to Saudi Arabia Antonio Villamor immediately dispatched a consular officer and an interpreter to Al-Qatif, some 300 kilometers from Riyadh, to interview her and ascertain the allegations of the OFW and to help her.

On the urging of the embassy official, the Al-Qatif police summoned the employer on May 28 to present the OFW and shed light on the case. The employer agreed to let the OFW leave and to pay repatriation costs.

In a second note to Villamor dated May 30, the OFW reiterated her thanks to the embassy for facilitating her repatriation. She also informed the ambassador that her employer gave her an additional 4,250 riyals for travel expenses.

The case of the OFW was brought to the attention of President Macapagal-Arroyo by Sen. Loren Legarda who sought immediate action on the alleged rape and the murder of another domestic helper in Kuwait. Cynthia D. Balloso

Migrant workers of the world unite with HK assembly

By Jerome Aning

MIGRANT WORKERS FROM AROUND the world, the Philippines included, are gearing up for the founding assembly of the International Migrants Alliance on IMA on June 15 and 16 which will be held in Hong Kong.

Connie Bragas Regalado, Migrante International chair, said among the topics for discussion would be issues on wage, remittance, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), the war on terror and its impact on migrant workers, undocumented migrants, women and children, health and HIV/AIDS and other social woes of forced migration.

"The time for the grassroots migrants, immigrants, refugees and other displaced people has arrived. The IMA shall make sure their voices will never be discounted again," Regalado said in a statement.

Already, 121 individuals from 97 organizations and 24 countries have confirmed their participation in the gathering, she said. Irene Fernandez, a prominent Malaysian human rights activist and founder of women's rights organization, Tenaganita, will keynote the event.

Coordinators of IMA include the Task Force Asia Europe, the Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers (ATKI) in Hong Kong, Migrante and its chapters, the Alay Sa Coalition for Immigrant Rights and Aid Focus in the United States, and Malaysia's Tenaganita.

"For many years, many have spoken on our behalf. This time, we will speak for ourselves," said Esti Lestari, ATKI representative and spokesperson of the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body (ASMICABE), in a separate statement.

Lestari said the presence of a vibrant movement of migrant workers in Hong Kong played a big part in the decision to hold the IMA assembly there.

PHILHEALTH CIRCULAR

TO : ALL ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONAL HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS
ALL OTHERS CONCERNED

SUBJECT : Status of Accreditation of Institutional Health Care Providers on-site Applicable Updates

The Department of Health through the Bureau of Health Facilities and Services has institutionalized and synchronized the issuance of hospital's license to operate and accreditation systems under the one-stop-shop licensing. The issuance is now automatic upon submission of required documents and subjected to the courtesy six month development by the Bureau of Health Facilities and Services. Any change applies within the validity as a result of monitoring done by the DOH.

Section 10 of the IRR of R.A. 7875 as amended by R.A. 9241 Specific Accreditation Requirements, Section 10.1 Accreditation Period and the Circulars of Implementing of Hospitals the Accreditation provides for the mandatory submission of DOH license for hospitals. Change in the status of the said license shall automatically affect the accreditation.

In view of the above, the change in the status of DOH one-stop-shop license of an accredited provider or a result of monitoring within the validity of accreditation shall be subject to PHIC and the same shall be the accreditation status of the provider with the corporation. The date of effectivity shall be the same as that of the DOH. The said cases immediate suspension, downgrading and decrease in authorized bed, only. Changes and or upgrading increase in number of accredited beds authorized with specific policy guidelines are not covered by the circular.

Further, applicable policies on claims reimbursement and payment mechanisms shall likewise be effected such as those written in the IRR of R.A. 7875 as amended by R.A. 9241. Rule VIII Section 81 letter (a) and (b) states the provision that if a health care institution after its category is downgraded/upgraded pursuant to the final level as per basis to claim for such downgraded/upgraded category or determined by the Corporation or cases deemed the effectivity of change in the category of the provider from existing reimbursement policy at the moment, the expenses of claim shall be computed based on the higher category.

For implementation and compliance.

Digitally signed by: [illegible]
Acting President and CEO

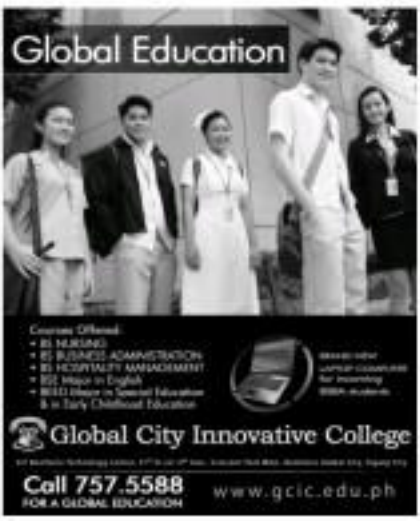
5,000 Indians unaccounted for

CLOSE TO 5,000 Indian tourists who entered the country between 2003 and June 2007 are unaccounted for.

The Bureau of Immigration made the announcement yesterday after discovering a discrepancy between the number of visas issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs during the period and the number of Indian tourists who actually entered the country.

In a statement, Immigration commissioner Marcelino Libanan said that the DFA issued a total of 39,495 tourist visas to Indian nationals during the period. But records show that 44,295 Indian tourists entered the country. The figures mean that 4,800 Indians did not use their visas from questionable sources, Libanan said.

It also means a loss of P12 million to revenue from fees of P2,500 per tourist visa.



The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) has been receiving requests from the public to trace bank deposits of deceased or incompetent persons. The Law on Secrecy of Bank Deposits (RA No. 1405, as amended), however, inhibits BSP from making inquiries regarding these requests.

The law specifically prohibits the inquiry by any person or institutions including the BSP into deposit accounts and investments in government securities (including the mere existence of the same) except for specific circumstances.

A court order is generally required to inquire into any deposit account or investment in government securities. Nevertheless, inquiries may still be pursued if the depository bank of the deceased or incompetent person can be identified through documents such as passbooks, certificates, automated teller machine cards, etc.

In such a case, the representative of a deceased or incompetent person can inquire directly from the depository bank the requirements for tracing deposits or withdrawing from deposit accounts.

The requirements may vary for each bank. The person seeking assistance may be asked to present documents to prove his/her relation to the deceased or his/her estate or the incompetent depositor, as follows:

Requesting Party	Document Needed
a. Regular Administrator	Letter of Administration issued by the appropriate court or a probate proceeding, testate or intestate
b. Special Administrator	Order of Appointment as a special administrator by the appropriate court in a probate proceeding
c. Executor with will annexed	Letter of Administration issued by the appropriate court in a probate proceeding after taking into consideration the fact the executor/s named in a will have refused or is unable to act as such
d. Guardian with letters of guardianship	Letter of Guardianship issued by the appropriate regional trial court which is sufficient in form and substance to invest the appointee with due authority

In addition, the bank may request other documents to further establish the identity of the requesting party and to show proof of relation, filiation, and authority of the requesting party to the decedent or his or her estate or incompetent depositor.

Any assistance in the tracing of bank deposits of deceased or incompetent persons rendered by a bank shall be subject to its compliance with the Law on Secrecy of Bank Deposits and other pertinent rules.

For further clarification, please contact:
FINANCIAL CONSUMER AFFAIRS GROUP
Supervision and Examination Sector
BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS
4th Floor, Multinational Building, BSP Complex
Malate, Manila

E-mail address: consumeraffairs@bsp.gov.ph
Tel. Nos.: Direct Line (+632) 523-3931 • Trunkline (+632) 524-7011 local 2564

For more information on current issues and regulations relating to e-banking transactions, please visit the BSP website: www.bsp.gov.ph

GMA bars conversion of rice lands to ensure sufficiency

By Christine O. Avendaño and Jeannette I. Andrade

AS A STEP TO ENSURING THE country's rice sufficiency, President Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered a moratorium on the conversion of rice lands to other uses.

The President on May 16 issued Administrative Order No. 226 suspending the processing and approval of all applications for conversion of rice lands for two years.

Aside from rice lands, the suspension covers lands mentioned in Republic Act No. 8435 and considered to be in the Network of Protected Areas for Agricultural and Agro-Industrial Development.

"[These] include all irrigated areas, irrigable lands already covered by irrigation projects, allowed plant lands highly suitable for agriculture whether irrigated or not; agro-industrial crop lands or lands presently planted to industrial crops that support the vitality of existing agricultural infrastructure and agro-based enterprises; highland areas located at an elevation of 500 meters or more that have the potential for growing semi-temperate and high value crops; all agricultural lands that are ecologically fragile, mangrove areas and fish sanctuaries," according to the AO.

Implementation of the measure was was left to the Department of Agrarian Reform.

Three years ago, an agriculture expert said, the government was warned there would be a rice crisis this year.

Artemio Balisacan, director of the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture, said experts had submitted papers to the Department of Agriculture predicting a crisis but the government did not act on it.

Speaking at a recent forum sponsored by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, Indonesia said agriculture experts met in conference in 2005 and forecast a rice crisis although they had mistakenly thought it would be triggered by El Niño.

"We knew a crisis was coming, although we did not anticipate it would emanate from a global crisis," the former DA consultant told the bishops.

"We know the solutions," Balisacan told the forum. "The problem is implementation and sustaining the implementation."

He said the government was not investing enough in research and infrastructure -- particularly irrigation -- compared to our neighbors Vietnam, Thailand or China, and the cost of producing rice in the country remained steep.

DENR cuts unnecessary travel, fuel consumption

THE ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT was able to cut its fuel consumption by 50 percent by avoiding unnecessary travel, said Environment Secretary Lito Atienza.

From September 2007 to February 2008, the agency spent only P260,000 on gasoline, compared to the P480,000 it spent during the same period in 2006, Atienza told a press conference yesterday.

"A very careful use of our vehicles and the high controlled withdrawal of fuel from our home pump helped us cut our gasoline consumption by 50 percent," he said.

Atienza's announcement came a day after Malacañang revived its energy consumption campaign to mitigate the impact of the skyrocketing prices of oil.

On Tuesday, President Macapagal-Arroyo re-launched the presidential task force on energy headed by Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, for the same purpose.

Atienza said that all DENR employees have been properly advised against making "side" trips and other unessential travel as part of the agency's contribution the government campaign to save on energy.

He said the agency will also soon be using renewable energy with the installation of solar panels in its building.

Before "non-human" will also be set up in the DENR grounds to scare counselor for the office's "technical needs" such as toilet flushing and watering of plants, Jocelyn R. Uy

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, May 30, 2008
8th Week in Ordinary Time
Sacred Heart of Jesus

1st Reading: Dt 7:6-11
2nd Reading: 1 Jn 4:7-16
Gospel: Mt 11:25-30

At that time Jesus said, "Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I praise you, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to simple people. Yes, Father, this is what pleased you.

"Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you who work hard and who carry heavy burdens and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest. For my yoke is good and my burden is light."

Commentary:

The Lord allows His Sacred Heart to be pierced by a lance so that we might enter into the life He has prepared for us. He dwells on the cross to show us how much He loves us. His glorious resurrection allows us to experience life to the full.

Even after we have come to Him, in order to live our life by encountering His Sacred Heart in the Eucharist of the Holy Eucharist, and in the always until the consummation that because we are members of His Body, His Sacred Heart is always with us. May our celebration of this great feast allow us to radiate in others the love that comes from His Sacred Heart.

Kuwaiti emir may commute Pinay's death sentence

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE EMIR OF KUWAIT MIGHT commute the death sentence of Filipina maid May Vesina to life imprisonment following the intervention of monarchs from friendly countries.

Vice President Noli de Castro, presidential adviser on Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), said this yesterday as he expressed optimism about the possible escape of Vesina from execution.

According to De Castro, foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo relayed this possibility after the latter was informed by Spain's foreign minister about the possible commutation of Vesina's sentence.

De Castro said the Philippines had sought the help of Spain, particularly King Juan Carlos, as well as that of the rulers of Bahrain to intercede for Vesina. He said these two monarchs are close friends of Kuwait Emir Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah.

De Castro said Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait Nur Endaya relayed the same news to him.

Early this month, De Castro went to Kuwait to personally appeal for the commutation of Vesina's sentence when he handed the government's letter of condolences on the death of the sons's father, Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

The Vice President said the emir promised to give the Philippine government's appeal for Vesina his "very serious consideration."

De Castro acknowledged that there was still no official announcement from Kuwait on the commutation of Vesina's sentence. However, the Vice President said he was confident that what was relayed to Romulo by the Spanish foreign minister was one positive news to look forward to.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

DAVAO CITY SUBDIVISION
With development permit and license to sell (Note: govt. policy—no more conversions) 15 has. At P320.00/sm
About 7 kms from heart of city

'TEST FLIGHT' FOR DELAYED TERMINAL

Local airlines to fly out of Naia3

AIRPORT AUTHORITIES ARE considering starting domestic flight operations in the new Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 as they plan yet again a "partial phased opening" of the controversial facility.

Alfonso Cusi, the general manager of the Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa), the domestic flights will be a kind of "warm up" to the long delayed operations of the controversial hub, with a later shift to international flights.

Cusi said in a statement that the Miaa was pursuing "a deliberate strategy of partial and phased opening, starting with domestic flight operations and subsequently shifting to international flight operations on a selective basis."

But this would be after the appropriate engineering tests and assessments are conducted to determine the safety and operability of the different services of the facility, he said.

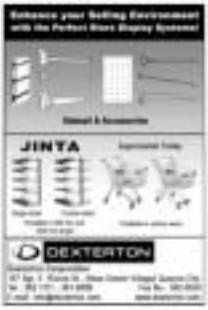
Airport officials did not set a date for the start of the dry run but said some 80 percent of air-oriented systems, from baggage handling, loading bridges, and security screening to electrical, air-conditioning and fire protection, have been installed since the "completion work" began earlier this year.

"We are doing everything as one to undertake the testing and testing of the most important electro-mechanical systems and provision for passenger services so that the terminal would be put into production use at the soonest possible time," Cusi said.

Last Wednesday, a delegation from the House of Representatives made a tour of the facility, the second visit of members of Congress this year.

Last January, members of the House oversight committee toured the terminal and saw for themselves the structural defects that the Miaa had cited as the reason for the delayed opening.

Rachel Arenas, Marissa H. Durano-Illa, Jaime Laude



Migrant workers' groups reject psychological tests

By Jerome Aning

MIGRANT WORKERS' groups have condemned a Filipino diplomat for proposing that domestic helpers be made to undergo rigid psychological testing before being deployed abroad.

"Stupid," "idiotic," "self-serving," "foolish" and "irrational" were some of the words that Migrante International and the rising Kilusang Anti-Diskriminasyon Migrante Mindanao used to describe the proposal of Rustin Balcolmo, the Philippine consul general in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

In an interview with the Dubai-based Gulf News, Balcolmo said the consulate made the proposal to determine whether an applicant was psychologically and emotionally strong enough to withstand the rigors of the job.

Migrante chair Connie Bragas-Regalado said the proposal revealed how "utterly detached" Filipino diplomats are from the harsh realities that overseas Filipino workers face daily.

"Abortions and hysterectomies should wake up to the reality that domestic workers snap and are driven to the brink of insanity because they are subjected to the most degrading and inhuman treatment such as physical and mental abuse, rape, non-payment of wages and torture," Regalado said in a statement.

Money-making

"They also face the reality that Philippine Embassy officials will not lift a finger to help them. Some who will not be driven to insanity under these circumstances?" she said.

The APMM said Balcolmo's proposal could also indicate an indirect admission by the consulate that it was overwhelmed by the large number of welfare cases and lacked the capability to take care of the psychological and other needs of domestic workers in distress.

"Mr. Balcolmo stated that the workers' completion (to study overworking, physical and sexual abuse, unpaid salaries and no days off. No amount of psychological tests before departure can prepare domestic workers to these kinds of violations on their rights," Ramos Balcolmo, the APMM managing director, said in an e-mail message.

Regalado said the proposed psychological test was but another scheme of the government to exact more money from the OFWs.

"We connect with the billions of remittances that are sustaining the ravaging government economic machinations now that Israel, big migrant Philippine city," she said.

If Balcolmo truly believes in alleviating the ire of the OFWs, he should instead propose measures that would scrap the exorbitant fees and charges imposed on the overseas workers, she said.

Balcolmo said what the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration should do also is to swiftly and properly address the complaints of domestic helpers.

Instead of blaming the psychological deficiencies of the Filipino workers for the abuses they face, Balcolmo should instead "look into how he and the (Philippine) Embassy handles cases that are new to a country like the UAE and why this has been the situation over there."

LOPEZES, DI SAKLAW NG BATAS?

Kung may respeto ang mga Lopez sa ating batas:

- **Bakit hindi pa nila isinosoli sa publiko** ang kabuuan ng **P30 bilyong income tax ng Meralco na ipinatong nila sa atin mula 1994 hanggang 2002?** Ang refund nito'y iniutos mismo ng Korte Suprema.

- **Bakit** ni singkong-duling ng **P21.4 bilyong meter deposit refund natin ay hindi pa ibinabalik ng Meralco** gayung 2004 pa iniutos ng Energy Regulatory Commission?

- **Bakit walang pakundangang ibinasura ng pro-Lopez Meralco board ang cease and desist order (CDO) ng Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) kaugnay ng May 27 Stockholders' Meeting nito?**

- **Hindi ba dapat ay sinunod muna ng Lopez-controlled Meralco board ang utos ng SEC** bago kinuwestyon ito sa korte partikular sa Court of Appeals?

Ilang teknikalidad ang ginawang palusot ng mga Lopez sa pagsuway sa SEC. Ngunit bakit binalewala ng mga Lopez ang paglabag ng Meralco sa proxy votes provision ng Corporate and Securities Code na basehan ng SEC order?

HINDI BA DOUBLE STANDARD OF JUSTICE ITO?!
Ang Batas ay sinusuway o tinutupad ng mga Lopez depende sa kung ano ang pabor sa interes nila!!!

Kung malakas ang loob ng mga Lopez na sumuway sa batas, ito'y:

- **Dahil** ba sa suporta ng ilang senador, kongresista, justices at ilang so-called cause-oriented groups?

- **Dahil** ba ipinangangalandakan nila ang ABS-CBN, dzMM at ANC?!!!

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GMA-Bush summit set at White House

Front page A1

(Economic) and global trade."

Bunye said Ms Arroyo would take the opportunity to thank Bush for his administration's support to Filipinos war veterans through the US Veterans Affairs in Manila and the Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Quezon City.

"[But] will also express her hope for a meaningful trade mission or remaining issues relating to our veterans," he said.

Ms Arroyo will personally thank the US Senate for its "historic" vote for the Veterans Benefits Bill, which will benefit Filipino war veterans, he said.

More meetings

Bunye said Ms Arroyo would also meet with the Philippines-US Friendship Caucus, a group composed of members of the US House of Representatives particularly interested in strengthening relations between the two countries.

She will have a chance to meet with some US Cabinet officials when the both consultations with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

In March, the MCC granted the Philippines compact-eligible status, opening the door to large grants for sustainable growth. The Philippines soon selected after passing objective indicators in the areas of governing justly, investing in its citizens and encouraging economic freedom, Bunye said.

And to advance her environmental agenda, Ms Arroyo will attend a special meeting of stakeholders in the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI).

"The meeting will bring the private and business sectors in to this important initiative on the environment," Bunye said.

"The CTI is focused on three primary areas...protecting coral reefs from man-made and natural disturbances, developing sustainable fisheries and creating food security for the region's inhabitants," he said.

Business dinner

The Asian-US Business Council and the US Chamber of Commerce will jointly host a dinner in honor of Ms Arroyo in Washington, according to Bunye.

In New York, Ms Arroyo will meet with a number of business and investment groups.

She will also host a reception for the permanent representatives to the United Nations in connection with Santiago's candidacy for a seat in the International Court of Justice.

Zamboanga bombing kills 2, wounds 23

Front page A1

trip in Basilan in Tawi-Tawi, where she launched a modified "humanitarian" development project, visited a school, witnessed the groundbreaking of new for the Food for School program, and led the groundbreaking of the Tawi-Tawi bridge-road partnership project.

When informed of the bomb attacks, Bunye, who was attending to activity of the Asian-funded solar power project in Tighaw, Zamboanga del Sur, said: "We are horror-stricken.

"It's horrifying that anyone would do this. It's appalling, and I hope law enforcement agencies find those responsible, hold them, and subject them to the rule of law."

The ambassador said it was ironic that "our colleagues injured are the very ones who rushed on the incident to where."

She added: "The very moment we're seeing the bodies of dead below, they are in the hospital [in] very tragic. I feel devastated. These are friends and colleagues. I visit Zamboanga City often; I feel like I know half the city.

EOD CLOSE FOR COMFORT The office of the US-funded Mindanao Off-Grid Renewable Energy Program (at right) is just across from the main gate of Edwin Andrews Air Base in Zamboanga City. Zamboanga has been the target of numerous bomb attacks in recent years carried out by Moro separatist groups and criminal gangs.

Condemnable act

"It's hard now to take it personally when people you love are involved."

Ronnie Ignacio, said the attack on the building that housed the Asian office would "definitely" not deter the US government from pursuing its development partnership in Southern Philippines.

"We strongly condemn this act, and authorities are now investigating it," Peace Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in Malacañang.

Chief Supt. Jaime Caringal, Western Mindanao police director, described the bomb as "an improvised explosive with a cellular phone as triggering device."

"It was manually operated by the bomber and exploded at 10 a.m.," he told the reporters.

Guerrero also said the attack was an "act of terrorism."

Earlier in the day, Senior Supt. Leonardo Diesta, acting police chief of Zamboanga City was unsure what caused if the attack had something to do with the state of Ms Arroyo and the Amelioration.

Diesta said police investigators were still trying to determine the explosive used and the motive behind the attack.

Last month, the US and Australian governments issued an advisory warning to citizens against traveling to Mindanao, particularly the Zamboanga peninsula.

Not Abu Sayyaf

In the past, military and police authorities had blamed the extremist Abu Sayyaf for the bomb attacks in Zamboanga City.

US troops have been helping the Philippine military in the campaign to uproot out the Abu Sayyaf, which is on the US government's list of terrorist organizations.

But Tarhata said police investigators were "looking at the Special Operations Group of the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) as being responsible for this blast."

Caringal said the heavy losses suffered by the MILF in Basilan during this week's skirmishes with Marines might have been the reason for the attack.

He said the men arrested in connection with the explosion was being questioned.

The MILF, which is engaged in peace talks with the government, has repeatedly denied the existence of a special Operations Group. It has also accused the military and the police of derailing the peace negotiations.

Congressman Climaco described the explosion as "very powerful."

"The first floor [of the ASEAN-ILAG building], the main area that houses the Asean office, was really wrecked, with all the walls torn down. My office was also damaged, but not the same as the Asean office," Climaco told the reporters.

No damage to base

"We are saddened by this blast, especially because these [are] were innocent people, civilians, and we still don't have an idea about the motive and reason," she said.

On the planned visit by the Japanese to Manila, Lt. Gen. Pedrito Cadungog, commanding general of the Philippine Air Force, said the explosion caused no damage to Edwin Andrews Air Base.

"The visitors are [sure] is safe," he said, adding that the area had been put under tight security to ensure no one is crunched opening procedures.

Cadungog briefed reports that Ms Arroyo was to have toured the air base in flying to Tawi-Tawi.

"Whoever said that gave an irresponsible statement. Why would the President use the air base when her aircraft was go straight to Tawi-Tawi?" he said.

Cadungog said 1-C-130 and a Nikker F-27 were only on standby at the Air base, waiting to pick up Ms Arroyo's party particularly members of the Presidential Security Group.

Briefing reporters in Manila, Chief Supt. Eleazar Bartolome said the Philippine National Police in Western Mindanao had been put on heightened alert as a result of the explosion.

Bartolome refused to disclose details on the explosive device. "All possible motives are being explored. Let's give our investigators some time," the PNP spokesperson said. With reports from Nikko Dizon, Christine O. Avendaño and Alexis Pinpin in Manila, Julius M. Bawag, Inquirer Mindanao

RP economic growth slows to 5.2% in first quarter

Front page A1

a slowdown in the US economy and the negative effects of a rising peso," Romulo Virola, secretary general of the National Statistical Coordination Board, said yesterday.

The growth of the economy as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP) declined nearly 3 percentage points from the 7.8 percent in the first quarter of 2007.

GDP is the total value of goods produced and services rendered within an economy in a given period.

The growth rate was, however, within the government's official forecast of between 5.2 percent and 6.2 percent.

Revisions

The latest economic performance put an end to the high growth recorded last year, when the full-year GDP surged 7.3 percent, the fastest in three decades.

The government revised down the 2007 fourth-quarter GDP growth to 6.4 percent from 7.4 percent. The figure for the whole of 2007 was similarly tweaked to 7.2 percent from 7.3 percent.

The gross national product (GNP), the value of goods produced and services rendered by Filipinos (whether working in the country or abroad), inched at 7.2 percent in the first three months, maintaining the growth posted in the first quarter of last year.

Belt tightening

"We are in an era of high oil prices and people are tightening their belts," Augusto Santos, director general of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), said in a press conference yesterday.

Bordering had prices tend to force households to scrimp, resulting in sustained growth of businesses, he said. In turn, the economy is less able to create more jobs necessary to increase the overall level of income.

One of slowest

Although neighboring countries also suffered the consequence of soaring oil prices, Santos said the Philippine growth in the first quarter was one of the slowest in the region.

Thailand and Indonesia, which the Philippines beat last year in terms of economic growth, grew faster in the first quarter at 6 percent and 6.3 percent, respectively.

Biggest rice importer

Santos said the volatile external environment had a large impact on the Philippines from other Southeast Asian countries because the former depends more heavily on imported oil. Imported oil accounts for 10 to 40 percent of the country's total energy requirements.

The Philippines, the world's biggest rice importer, also continues to suffer from high rice prices, which is one of the factors behind the country's high inflation rate.

Virola said the country's trade balance among is a deficit of $22.5 billion from a surplus of $4.02 billion in the same period last year.

After taking into consideration the impact of high oil prices, Santos said the government's economic team decided to reduce the GDP growth target for the entire year to between 5.7 percent and 6.3 percent.

The government earlier aimed for a GDP growth of 6.3 percent to 7 percent.

"We're seeing slower growth for 2008 and a slower growth for 2009," Santos said.

Hardest hit

He said the world would "probably" suffer a repeat of the 1970s crisis of high oil prices, high inflation and depressed economic growth.

"It's really a tough environment as a result of the global economic slowdown and this will really hit the poor," he said.

He said the hardest-hit were the 23.3 million Filipinos, or 26.1 percent of the population, who earn P87 ($1.32) or less a day (See box of story.)

To help young private the economy, the government has decided to spend beyond the approved national budget of P1.226 trillion for this year, according to Santos. The Department of Finance said the government was looking at P63.4 billion in additional spending.

Should the additional spending be realized, he said, this would help the economy achieve the high end of the revised GDP growth target.

Supplemental budget

The economic team—composed of officials from the Neda and the finance and budget departments—is preparing a proposed supplemental budget for approval by Congress following the decision to spend more this year.

Santos said the government could not spend beyond the already approved national budget unless Congress gives its nod.

"For the Philippine economy not to suffer from a substantial slowdown, government will have to spend more," he said.

Poor families

The Neda chief said the economic team would next month decide what specific programs to be financed by the additional P63.4 billion. The programs would target poor families and sectors that need support the most.

He said the P63.4 billion would be financed either by borrowings or revenue from the sale of non-essential assets.

The decision to increase spending means that the government is giving up its goal of posting a balanced budget this year, Santos said. With reports from AFP and Reuters

High oil prices peril poverty reduction program

By Michaella V. Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT'S AGENda in reduce poverty incidence to as low as 17 percent of Filipino families by 2010 may likely be derailed by the adverse effects of rising oil and food prices on households.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said the continued rise in oil prices, which pushes the cost of other commodities, might make it difficult for some poor families to get out of poverty.

The latest report on poverty incidence said 28.9 percent of Filipino families in 2006 fell below the poverty line, as they failed to meet the minimum income required to meet their basic daily needs. The poverty level in 2006 was worse than in 2003, when the government documented 24.4 percent of Filipino families as being poor.

Poverty-reduction target

The Arroyo administration was hoping to reduce the figure to a range of 17 to 20 percent by 2010 in part of its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations. UN member-countries have committed to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015.

But the Neda said the soaring price of oil in the world market posed a tough challenge to the domestic economy to meet the government's poverty-reduction target.

Increases in oil and commodity prices make the minimum amount of income required to meet a basic life basic needs. An increase in poverty incidence means when families are not able to increase their income commensurate with the rising cost of living.

"We might have to revise the target on poverty reduction to take into account changes in macroeconomic assumptions," Neda Director General Augusto Santos said yesterday.

The government's economic team on Wednesday revised its growth projection for the economy this year from between 6.3 percent and 7 percent, to between 5.7 percent and 6.3 percent.

The cut in the growth target came amid the slowdown in consumer spending and investments, which resulted from the soaring price of goods and services. Economic managers did not expect the price of oil to breach the $1.00-a-barrel mark when the original economic growth target was set.

Dolly Aglay necro tomorrow

NECROLOGICAL RITES for Dolores "Dolly" Aglay-Elona, commodities correspondent of Thomson Reuters, will be held on Saturday, May 31 at 4 p.m.

Interment will be at Heritage Park on Sunday, June 1, after a 9 a.m. Mass.

Her remains lie in state at Chapel 8 of the Arlington Memorial Homes along Araneta Avenue in Quezon City.

Dolly, who also worked for a time as a business reporter for the Philippine Star, died on May 26 at the age of 46.

She was survived by husband Melchor "Mel" Elona of The Philippine Star and children Julian and Pilar, parents Pacita N. and Maximiano, sisters Josephine and Jane and brother Pedro Jr.

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Meralco admits charging 11% …

From page A1

shortchanged because of the government-sanctioned "take-or-pay" provision in its contract with Meralco.

Meralco and First Gas are controlled by the Lopez family.

"First Gas did not engage in ghost deliveries. Napocor (National Power Corp.) should be man enough to explain this to the consumers," Ibarreo said.

First Gas explained earlier all the contracted electricity was not delivered during the 2000-2001 period because Napocor transmission lines were still inadequate.

Charges up to 14.4%

Villafuerte confronted Meralco representatives with figures that showed the utility was charging its residential and commercial consumers 14.4 percent of its systems loss costs.

"We'd like to reiterate that the 9.3-percent cap is at the level of the distribution utility not to a particular customer segment," Alfonso said before the committee.

He said Meralco strictly complied with this cap under the Anti-Pilferage Act of 1994.

"What you manage out the different charges from commercial, residential and industrial, that's the cost that shouldn't exceed 9.3 percent. As far as residential is concerned we're now at 11 percent," he said.

Villafuerte said the law placed the cap on recoverable systems loss at 9.3 percent and said that this should be implemented across all consumer segments. He said the overcharge was equivalent to 3C centavos per kilowatt or P6 billion a year.

Evidence needed

He told Energy Regulatory Commission Chair Rodolfo Albano that he would go to the ERC to demand a refund. Albano said the ERC would welcome the petition but added that Villafuerte should bring documentary evidence to support his allegation.

Almazora told the committee that systems loss greater in residential areas because of the amount of voltage that was needed to be decreased here the greater plants.

"Power that comes from Mapouc is 220,000 volts. That can't go to a home. That home will be burned," Almazora said. "When we go to the residential areas with lower voltage, that's where the losses increase. Systems loss is at 11 percent," he added.

Residential use costs more

In a telephone interview later, Almazora explained that the computation of systems loss charges for specific customer classes was based on the voltage level of the power delivered to these customers.

In the case of residential users, he said the systems loss charge was higher because power from the source—the generation facilities—had to pass through a higher number of Meralco transformers and longer stretches of distribution lines compared to industrial power users.

"The lower the voltage—220 volts in the case of residential users—the higher the systems loss. That's very basic," he said.

For industrial customers, he said the systems loss charge was only around 4-4.5 percent since power from the source travels a shorter distance in decimination.

"Most of these customers also have their own transformers so we don't charge them anymore for that. Also, some include us as a very near-way delivery system, so the possibility of systems loss is very low," he said.

Computations approved by ERC

All formulae used to compute the different systems loss levels had been approved by the ERC, he said.

"The ERC's formula for computation have been. There are not just numbers that they pull from the air. Our regulator knows what it is doing. Besides, this is also how many distribution utilities in other countries compute their systems loss charges," he said.

Cabinet study group ready to submit report on how to cut power rates

THE CABINET STUDY group looking into ways to lower power rates will submit its report to President Macapagal-Arroyo next week, Finance Secretary Margarita Teves told the business yesterday.

The group, which Teves heads, yesterday met separately with the representatives of Manila Electric Co. and Winston Garcia, president and general manager of the Government Service Insurance System.

"We listened to their proposals on how to reduce power costs," said Teves who declined to give details. "We will try to give our report to the President at the next Cabinet meeting."

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said he did not think that the study group was affected by the corporate squabble between Garcia and the Lopez-controlled Meralco.

Bunye said Teves' meeting with the Meralco executives would "dispose controversies" that the Palace was out to muzzle the Lopezes.

The study group was formed during the Cabinet meeting on Panglao Island in Bohol last week that discussed ways of lowering power rates in the country one of the highest in Asia.

Bunye said the Meralco executives who met with the group were Jesus Francisco, president; Monico Jacob, regulatory management chief; and Christian Monsod and Cesar Virata, board directors.

Christine O. Avendaño

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2 highly charged lawmakers clash

From page A1

fours, apparently provoke Bukidnon Rep. Teofisto Guingona III's interruption of his questions to First Gas Power executives regarding the alleged P13 billion worth of "ghost deliveries" in 2000, same as with the first gas.

"I do not know … whose entity he represents, for First Gas or the Meralco," Villafuerte said of Guingona, as the former was asking Richard Tantoco, First Gas executive vice president, about the payments recovered by First Gas from Meralco for undelivered electricity.

Guingona earlier interrupted Villafuerte, saying the ghost deliveries the latter was alleging had been the subject of a Senate inquiry and were classified a "classified" issue.

Cross ownership

First Gas, which owns the 1,000-megawatt (MW) Sta. Rita power plant, and Meralco are controlled by the Lopez family. Another firm owned by the Lopezes, FGP Corp., which operates the 500-MW San Lorenzo power plant, also supplies Meralco with electricity.

The cross-ownership is the subject of the congressional inquiry into how Meralco's power rates, the highest in the country and the second highest in Asia, could be lowered.

"I protest, Mr. Chairman. That's unsolicited for," Guingona said.

"I represent the second district of Bukidnon. I represent the Filipino people. We're talking about lowering power rates. And here you are accusing people of representing other interests," he said.

President's son

Only Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo, the chair of the committee on energy and a son of President Macapagal-Arroyo, and Villafuerte's march of documents in Manila envelopes cut between Villafuerte and Guingona.

"Let's talk about value-added tax reduction … but do not start accusing people of representing (interests)," Guingona said.

"Whenever Mahalaring wants something, you are at the forefront. When there is an impeachment you are at the forefront," he said, referring to Villafuerte's role in the dismissal of the Ilocos impeachment complaint against the President in as many years.

Villafuerte was trying to answer Guingona's tirades, but the latter's verbal counterclaim drowned out the blind lawmaker's retort.

Cool it

Villafuerte, nonetheless, managed to have the last word, "Don't feel guilty of who you represent. Be honest," he said.

"And be forthright," he added.

It was at this point that Arroyo banged the gavel to suspend the proceedings to cool things down.

During the lull, Arroyo asked Guingona if he was OK and if they could proceed with the hearing with sobriety.

"There's an NBA game going on. If you no longer want to proceed," Arroyo said in jest, referring to the Eastern Conference Finals match between the Boston Celtics and Detroit Pistons.

Ai-NON BABY

CUTEST BABY PHOTO CONTEST

PHOTO MECHANICS

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THE HEAT IS ON The National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms files a complaint against Meralco executives led by its chair, Michael Lopez, and president, Jesus Francisco. They are charged with large-scale estafa at the Department of Justice over the power distributor's questionable current-loss income of reserves earned by the owner and bill deposits of its consumers. NOEL PABALATE

Meralco officers question SEC order at Court of Appeals

By Lolo E. Sabarreta

THE BOARDROOM BATTLE at Manila Electric Co. shifted to the Court of Appeals yesterday and the first salvo was fired as the justice ordered to hear the case.

Meralco went to court to oppose a formidable and fearsome Commission (SEC) directive seeking an explanation as to why the utility firm should not be fined in contempt for ignoring an SEC cease-and-desist order (CDO) during Meralco's annual stockholders' meeting Tuesday.

Officers of Meralco and the Lopez Group, First Philippine Holdings Corp. (FPHC), raised the Investments Service Insurance System (ISSI) headed by Winston Garcia and the SEC of resorting to "tyranny" to gain control of Meralco.

The Meralco petition was raffled to Justice Vicente Roxas. After a few hours later, the CDO judged a protest, saying the "process of calling roses and petitions was not observed."

The SEC has scheduled a hearing today on its directive to Meralco to explain why it should not be punished and it will proceed about the case's issues is temporary restraining order (TRO).

"Until we are restrained, we will continue to protect the dignity and authority of this agency as mandated by law. If a higher court stops us, then we will respect that," said SEC Commissioner Jesus Martinez.

Meralco lawyers said that selection of Justice Roxas was removed precisely to delay the issuance of the TRO and allow the SEC hearing to take place.

CDO flaws

The CDO, issued at the behest of the OSS, sought to prevent Meralco from counting the Lopez nominees during Tuesday's meeting. Meralco ignored it. On Wednesday, the SEC directed Meralco to explain why it should not be penalized for declaring its order "null and void."

"There is an urgent and paramount necessity to prevent serious damage because if the SEC is allowed to usurp/take the power or prevent their recognition, then the right of the shareholders to vote for the directors will be forever foreclosed," said the petition of Meralco and FPHC. "Once the meeting is adjourned, there will be no way to remember the right to vote for this set of directors in the future."

The petition said the CDO was flawed because it was undated, lacked the SEC seal and docket number and there was no way of verifying its validity. It pointed out that the CDO plea was filed on Monday morning and the seven-page order was issued later the same day.

No verification

"Hence, it appears highly unlikely then (for the SEC) to have conducted any investigation or verification in the interim period," it said, pointing out that the CDO was served on Tuesday morning at the stockholders' meeting.

The SEC also did not deliberate as a collegial body on the CDO petition before it issued the CDO, the petition said. It said it would have been physically impossible for the SEC commissioners to meet prior to the issuance of the CDO because not all of them were in their offices then and a quorum could not be reached.

Elections was also issued against Meralco and FPHC officials, Meralco said. The SEC commissioners accepted the CDO allegations "as if they were indubitable facts," as seen in the wording of the CDO that echoed the OSS' complaints, the petition said.

Lack of due process

The partiality was also shown when volunteer-directed SEC officials let Hubert Tuanseca to supervise the stockholders meeting and disallow the Meralco managers from counting Lopez proxies.

Yet, Meralco said, the SEC would allow the OSS proxies to be tabulated. Success close to Meralco said that had it allowed the CDO to take place, OSS would have gained control of the utility and Lopezes effectively sidelined as unelected court has been ousted.

The SEC also has no jurisdiction over the dispute between Meralco and the CDO because the controversy is noncorporate and that the commission's adjudicatory powers has been transferred to regional trial courts, Meralco said in the Court of Appeals.

"It should be noted that petitioners, in spite violations of due process, went not, via the cling ground with a copy of the urgent petitions filed by the CDO with the SEC," it said.

With a report from Elizabeth Sanchez Lacson

Group files P889-M suit against Meralco

From page A1

said that the P889 million represented the 4-percent differential income from the customers' deposits since 1998, interest on the deposits was pegged at 8 percent until 1991, when the then Energy Regulatory Board (ERB) increased the rate to 13 percent.

Meralco classified 4 percent of the interest under customers' deposits, while 4 percent was initially placed under the operating reserves account, as seen in Meralco's financial statements. Later, the 4 percent was also included under customers' deposits.

But in its financial statements as of Dec. 31, 2006, Meralco reclassified the 4-percent tab as the "interest and other income account."

Undeniably swindled

Nazareno said Meralco's action constituted misappropriation.

"It has the undeniable effect of converting the money collected/solicited from the said subscribers/customers into dividends or corporate profits which, by its nomenclature and nature, become income of the shareholders of Meralco," Nazareno said.

Since the interest was reclassified as corporate income, then it ceased to be the money of the customers to which it rightfully belonged, it said. "The subscribers/customers were effectively and undeniably swindled," Nazareno said.

Nazareno pointed out that under the Distribution Services and Open Access Rules of the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), which replaced the ERB, Meralco was legally obligated to refund customer deposits as well as the interest.

Meralco welcomes move

Ilji Cura, Meralco vice president for corporate communications, said he had not seen the complaint but nevertheless welcomed the case.

"This will provide us with a venue to explain our side and clarify the issues," Cura said in a telephone interview. "Where we go to court, it will be evidence against evidence—better than the proliferation of half-truths and innuendoes in every the media," he said. "It will put an end to all the half-truths."

Nazareno has been a staunch adversary of Meralco for years. The group has been first to oppose many of Meralco's petitions for rate increases. It also pushed for the resurrection of the Magna Carta for Residential Electricity Consumers in 2004, which enshrined basic rights and obligations of consumers. (See *In the know*, Page A14.)

Among the rights are the exemption of households from service deposits, refund of bill deposits as long as customers promptly pay bills, and due process in the disconnection of service.

Escrow account for consumers

Nazareno also has demanded that Meralco deposits or deposited to put into an escrow account accessible to consumers. The amounts Nazareno asked to be held in trust in 2009 was P12 billion.

Prior to the passage of the Magna Carta, meter deposits could only be refunded upon termination of the customer's contract with the distribution utility.

Cayetano had earlier said libel, if it would implement meter and bill deposit refunds as soon as the ERC issues the guidelines.

During a hearing at the House committee on energy yesterday, ERC Chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said the dash guidelines for the refund should be released by next week, incorporating inputs from Meralco.

IN THE KNOW

THE CONSUMER WATCHdog National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms (Nasecore) was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in October 1998 as a nongovernment organization that aims to "carry, advocate, protect and promote the interest, rights and needs of [electricity consumers] and to advocate reforms in the electricity industry."

On June 28, 2004, Nazareno asked the Supreme Court to void the Energy Regulatory Board's June 2, 2004, order allowing Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) to increase its rates.

Nazareno, along with the Federation of Village Associations and the Federation of Las Piñas Homeowners Associations, told the high court that the ordered the Energy Power Industry Reform Act (Epira). Consumers were not given an opportunity to air their side, it said.

On Dec. 22, 2005, Nazareno filed a motion with the Energy Regulatory Commission asking to dismiss the joint settlement agreement of Meralco and National Power Corp. (Napocor).

The agreement settled a dispute arising from a 10-year contract for the supply of electricity. Under the agreement, Meralco would pay Napocor around P20.45 billion for the undisputed electricity as contained in the contract. But minus the adjustments that Napocor will have to pay, Meralco will only pay P10 billion.

Nazareno said the only way for the government to collect the entire amount and prevent Meralco from passing on the charges to consumers was to junk the settlement agreement.

Its incorporators included Procesalo Bagas, Rodolfo Cabestal, Cerdina Abora, Emmanuel Carreon and Rolando Floriano. Bagas is president and Abora chief finance officer. Other members of the Board of Trustees filed with the SEC in August 2006 were Singlenda Velasa, William Bayta Jr. and Nenilla Arcilla. (Elisa Victoria and Zaira Pedroza, Inquirer Research)

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OPINION

Have us your feedback: inquirer.opinion@inquirer.com.ph Website: www.inquirer.net/opinion

Nothing's sacred

EDITORIAL

THE PROBLEM WITH HOLIDAY ECONOMICS is not the economics; it is the holiday from history that lies, like a smug worm, at the very core of it. The concept of moveable feasts is nothing new, we are, after all, a country steeped in Catholic traditions. But the notion that the most consequential milestones in our history as a nation should be celebrated on the "Monday nearest" the actual date, simply because to do so is convenient and stimulates economic activity, should be summarized. It trivializes history, and reduces the role of citizens in an emerging democracy to mere consumerism.

The other day, Malacañang issued a reminder that June 9, Monday, will be a special non-working holiday, since Independence Day, June 12, falls on a Thursday. "All activities and celebrations in commemoration of Independence Day shall, however, remain to be observed on June 12," a spokesperson said.

From the perspective of the ordinary Filipino, however, Independence Day this year will be remembered—that, after all, is what commemoration means—on June 9. Official men will "remain to be observed" (in Malacañang's stilted language) by the government the following Thursday, but the people the government is supposed to serve will have already marked it three days before.

Unfortunately, legal and legislative fiat exist for this sorry charade of rollercoast and running. This year's schedule of regular and special non-working holidays is outlined in Proclamation 1483, dated Feb. 18, 2008. And Proclamation 1483 is based on Republic Act 9492, signed into law by President Macapagal-Arroyo on July 25, 2007. RA 9492 provides, in part, that certain national holidays shall be observed on the "Monday nearest" the traditional date.

Both the proclamation and the law were welcomed by many businessmen, because they brought some order back into the matter of holidays. After the President's legitimacy crisis erupted in mid-2005, Malacañang was quick to declare holidays as part of a strategy to defuse political tensions or diffuse public outrage. The law and the proclamation allowed businessmen to make plans with greater certainty.

But both measures also made holiday economics permanent. First tried in the early years of the Arroyo administration, the policy of creating long weekends to promote domestic travel to encourage greater spending appears to work well enough; the malls seem even more crowded than usual, the outbound traffic from major airports even heavier than usual.

But the increase in consumption has come at a steep price: a famously forgiving people have been encouraged—by the government, no less—to become forgetful, untruthful of history, too.

The truth is, it is not the rites, the ritual awards-laying and flag-raising and speech-making of officialdom, that are the true measure of commemoration. It is the officially sanctioned respite from work, the holiday that certainly disrupts our regular schedule, and rewards us thus something is out of the ordinary. Certainly, none of us march parades or join street demonstrations, but most of us take part in the great holidays simply by taking time off. When we do—well, we believe this is what educators call a teaching moment, when we are predisposed to learn something about our history and about ourselves, on April 9, or Aug. 21, or Nov. 30. Or, indeed, on June 12.

The decision to separate this opportunity from the rites does not only prioritize economic concerns over history's purposes; it also privileges officialdom over citizenship. The unwritten assumption seems to be: Let the masses enjoy themselves; the important people, anyway, will observe the holidays.

Ironic, isn't it, that the daughter of the president who moved the celebration of Independence Day from July 4 to the more appropriate June 12 should bemoan the president to decree that the date of independence doesn't actually matter. Of course it does; only those who do not understand that a nation's sense of self depends on its collective memory, or those who seek to profit from such a misunderstanding, will think celebrating June 12 on June 9 is a good thing.

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GSIS' failed bid also achieved good results

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

GSIS PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER Winston Garcia may have failed to oust the Lopezes from the management of Meralco, but we have to thank him for trying. Were it not for the noise he made about Meralco, this entry would still be merely doing what it has been doing during the pre-Winston Garcia era—overcharging its customers.

The Lopezes may still control Meralco, but they will be less confident now their demands have not been opposed, their senators under scrutiny, and their every move under watch as they have abused their privilege with impunity being reviewed. Most of all, the eyes of the public have been kept opened to the fact that for decades power consumers were being abused by Meralco. Consumers now know that they are not getting the true worth of the money they are paying Meralco. Most of it is lost in the "systems losses," as Meralco's own electric consumption, as Meralco's income tax payments, to the tax payments of Meralco executives, to the overpricing of electricity bought from Napocor and Meralco's sister companies—all of which are charged to its customers. Each consumer's power consumption bill is doubled because of these pass-on charges.

Also, Meralco subscribers now know that the biggest power distribution company in the country owes those billions of pesos that should be given back to them as refunds, as directed by the Supreme Court. And that they cannot now be forced to pay deposits for electric meters. It is our hope that we will have more enlightened and vigilant electric consumers.

If it also our hope that the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira) would be amended, that the politicians in the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) would be replaced with professionals, and that the power rates would finally be lowered. There, we hope. When all these happen, don't forget that Garcia made them happen.

• • •

Mayand Lim, the son of Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim, who has been charged with selling shabu in a buy-bust operation, has been released on a P400,000 bail. The evidence against Lim and two others co-accused—Joel Gabaldo and Ronald Pascual—said the judge, is weak—so far.

The police witness who testified at a summary hearing said that he did not actually see the buy-bust transaction inside a car, he being about 15 meters away from the car. Moreover, Lim, Gabaldo and Pascual were not the target of the buy-bust operation of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA). They were arrested only because they were there. Furthermore, the prosecution, which has full control of the proceedings, has agreed to submit the pot shown to bail on the basis of the evidence so far presented, and the court had no recourse but to resolve it on the basis of the evidence it heard, Judge Adelina Calderon Barpal said.

Lim was represented by lawyers Reynaldo Baguilat and Danilo Serrano, while Gabaldo was represented by lawyer Mario Gagdon.

Regarding pass-around that Lim would appear in every scheduled hearing, would not leave the country without the permission of the court, would comply with all the orders of the court, and would undergo drug rehabilitation.

• • •

The deadline for the filing of a motion for reconsideration (MR) by the Philippine government of the recent Supreme Court decision on the Nasi Terminal 3 case (GR. 169954 and 174168, ABDC vs DOTC) is fast approaching. If the government doesn't file an MR, or does not make the deadline, it will weaken the Philippine defense in the arbitration cases against Piatco and Fraport in Singapore and Washington. Total potential losses to the Philippine government is $1 billion.

In its decision, the Supreme Court placed the blame entirely on the government for the fiasco that led to the nullification of the Piatco contract for the construction of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Passenger Terminal III (Nasi III).

In two previous decisions (Agan Jr. vs Piatco and Republic vs. Gingoyon), the Supreme Court declared the Piatco contract null and void. In Agan, the Court itself concluded: "In sum, this Court rules that (in view of the absence of the requisite financial capacity of the Build-Operate-Transfer consortium, predecessor and respondent Piatco, the award by the PBAC (Pre-qualification Bids and Awards Committee) for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Nasi 3 is null and void."

However, the Court laid the blame entirely on the government which, according to concerned business and labor sectors, could mean dire consequences for the Philippines. Citing Page 25 of the decision, they said: "In its separate opinion in Agan, former Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban noted that "there was effectively no public bidding to speak of, the entire bidding process having been flawed and tainted from the very outset, therefore the award of the contract to Piatco and the subsequent amendments and the Concession agreement executed with the latter was likewise void ab initio, for" (in consideration of such a beginning flaw), it would be nonsense to even open the same to determine when the proper time to file the same should be reckoned. The process and all proposals and bids submitted in pursuance thereof, and not just Piatco's, were placed in doubt, and it would be foolhardy for the government to rely on them again. At the very least, it may be declared that there was a failure of bidding."

Business, labor and civil society leaders lament that "this declaration effectively exonerates Piatco and internal players the entire blame on the government for all irregularities that marred the Piatco contract, making the government liable for damages and sanctions by international arbitration committees in Singapore and Washington."

Free SMS: Populism gone berserk

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

IF THE GOVERNMENT HAS INDEED PROposed to make "texting" services free of charge, then Malacañang's once populism must really be on a rampage. First, cheap electricity and now free SMS. Boy, it doesn't get more populist than that, my men widespread, in my most endearing to the desperate, destitute Filipino.

In the Philippines today, anyone who shouts "Free SMS!" will be hailed as a hero and can expect the applause of the gallery—and anyone who opposes it can expect to be pointed at the villain. Any demagogue can dangle the prospect of saving every last peso on conscionable services like electricity or SMS.

And it is this precisely that I have warned about—the manipulation of popular sentiments for partisan purposes. The telecommunication giants are the new scoundrels, caught between the New People's Army who bust down their cell sites and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's spokesmen who hold them hostage to an endorsed rubble crying for blood. "Free SMS" resembles a shakedown, except that Malacañang threatens with guns, and populist thugs terrorize with the people's wrath.

Certainly there are many reforms that the telcos can undertake. When I first went abroad, I remember I can call cell phones from landlines without any extra charges, and vice-versa, and I ask: Why isn't it here?

Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza's true suggests that SMS may fall outside the scope of the telcos' franchise to transmit voice messages. The Supreme Court has long thrown out such distinctions in an old case where it said that modern technology has reduced all "messages" practically into nothing more than the electronic impulses. Moreover, the necessary voice that should, SMS is merely a few "add-on" services. That is not to able in one country. Here it is the other way around. Yet overwhelmingly profit not cost rates, and it is time that to the add-ons (SMS).

In the United States, the bulk of SMS subscribers is post-paid, where people pay a fixed monthly bill whether or not they use the service. Here, the "mga" masa ka of pre-paid cards means you record page points as the champion of the masses...at the expense of the downsized telecom giants. That will give the "pop-fad" ruling candidate a fresh mandate to put their cut from the telecom windfall into public projects, and a clueless nation will simply look the other way.

It exploits our lack of a civic culture. On the eve of a public good that savors above the gaggle of oversized egos and their packet-heads. In other words, Filipinos might take to the streets if they find SMS free by JUNE, but they didn't rebel when Abalos offered Ker 1000 million in grease money. Why? Because the 350 centos from their wallets, but the P200 million will come from businessmen who will just pass it on to the consumer's money in the end. The public coffers are open season, say to the greedest scoured.

Finally, Malacañang's latest cheap shot exploits the prevalent social distrust. The state, business, industry, academia—the poor think that we're all thieves. They assume the demagogue who demands for them more scraps from the rich man's table, even if that demagogue eventually wants the entire groaning table for herself and her kin. They prefer a 1950s-like SMS frenzy that is a one thing, rather than long-term social reform that will never be harvested.

That we cannot blame the commercials. They have been let down too often and too much. They like their goodies in the here and now, not in the future. They care for their own families, not the nation. To talk about the "future" and the "common" assumes a leadership they can trust, a public sphere they can inhabit. Without that, the rational thing is simply to make the Bretton Woods institutions and get the loot while it's hot.

It is not for us in Manic but rather to protect the Filipino from being conned yet again through personal ambitions that get a free ride on communal yearnings and insecurities. Remember that Hitler was hooky and democratically elected by his own people. Tragic, but even that, GMA can't claim for herself.

• • •

Comments to pasalongkaw@gmail.com

Why the Meralco coup of GSIS failed

THE BLUNTED ATTACK OF THE DOSSIERMISTS in some unusual of liberalism at its annual stockholders' meeting last Tuesday has left its hemorrhaging unit, Philamlife Insurance Inc. (Philam Life), a shambles. The smack came after the biggest collision between the administration of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and the Lopez family institutional establishment.

The Lopezes have retained control of Meralco after the bruising battle for proxy votes, in which the Lopezes and their allies captured nine of the 15 seats in the Meralco board, to the government's five.

The victory has restored the business community that I had presumed the shareholders as a dominant session of how for the government would go in taking control of private business matters that it considered hostile and in active opposition to its political agenda. The major media chamber feeder, the newspaper and television of the Inquirer conglomerate, had feared that a successful takeover of Meralco would close the way for similar assets seizure with the deployment of police and intrusive presence of the state, as well as to economic consequences as those of the gross privation Bataan, the NDDB.

All the same, the full play in the administration's campaign during the past few months to dislodge the Lopez family from the helm of Meralco, the country's largest power distributor, and the flagship of the Lopez business enterprises. This demonstration of no-holds-barred use of state power to attain a political agenda reminded with the ominous aim of bringing electricity rates down, drove the business bohemoths to empathize with the Lopez business group, which emerged, as the underdog in the epic conflict. This was the existential issue underlying the showdown at the Meralco Theater last Tuesday.

The 3-day balloting over the 1.8 billion private stock, which the Lopez family had tried up in support of their nominees for the board, was the longest and most bitterly fought corporate board room battle in the history of modern Philippine business. Even revealing than the fact that the Lopez group rolled back the government's takeover initiative, the showdown demonstrated a dispelling development—that the latter weapons used by the government to stop business in the season against blunders were now inconsistent. The SEC, which had a foothold of how many in the board, spun-handed the meeting, and in the battle for the proxy votes, the government spearhead the Securities and Exchange Commission to do to subdue the proxy went held by the Lopezes.

This exercise revealed that the government had pulled off the scope-deadpanning the administrative powers of the state in order to stifle political objection of crushing the economic power of the Lopezes. Although only a week before, President Arroyo tried to discover the notion that she was neutral in the electricity rates controversy and would not interfere in the battle for control of one of the Meralco managements, by hosting a presentation of Meralco executives in a Cabinet meeting in Baguio, Bohol.

Ex Boxing Gold Arnaiz Garcia pulled a surprise by unveiling a "team-and-clutch" list" from SEC stopping the counting of proxy votes. Accusing the Lopezes of "rigging" the process, the SEC had lodged a complaint with SEC challenging the proxies submitted by the Lopezes. Upon close examination by Meralco executives, these contained forged signatures

Saludo's appointment questioned

LETTERS

WE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE Labor Independent Confederation (PSCLINC), a national union representing more than 80,000 government employees nationwide, are greatly concerned about the recent appointment of Ricardo Saludo as chair of one of the most vital pillars of our democracy—the Civil Service Commission.

The CSC is the central personnel agency of the government. An independent, constitutionally-created body. Like the Commission on Audit and the Commission on Elections—it is supposed to be free from partisan politics.

We hope that the CSC would not be made to suffer the same fate as the Comelec, now a largely discredited, corruption-riddled institution that is beyond saving and utterly devoid of competence and credibility. The downward spiral of the Comelec under the Arroyo presidency was mainly brought about by the politicization of the appointment process. Sharin Hasegawa/Lawyers successfully ruined the institution by making it a post for crooked politicians.

Is Saludo's appointment a sign of bad things to come for the civil service? Saludo, in a statement, has promised to enhance public service through the CSC. This can only be possible if the CSC is insulated from partisan politics and corruption. It is not unknown to us, however, that Saludo is one of the staunchest allies of GMA. He has unfailingly demonstrated his loyalty to GMA. He has become an unswerving and articulate mouthpiece of a corrupt and incompetent administration. Mindful defending its misdemeanors and promoting its anti-poor policies.

Will Saludo be able to fulfill a most essential role of promoting a genuine, professional civil service system, ensuring its independence and impartiality? Will Saludo be able to uphold good governance, transparency and integrity when he himself has become an ardent defender of an administration that tolerates graft and corruption and curtails basic human rights?

Former Chief Justice Davide may have failed to cause respects as chair of the CSC, but we had no doubts that she was a person of integrity and significance. She openly criticized the current administration for its brazen transgressions of civil service laws and policies such as the unjust termination of upright bureaucrats and appointment of non-civil service eligible officials. Will Saludo be able to do the same? Will he be able to recommend partisan politics? Will he let beholders to the 1.3 million strong government workforce of the country? Or will he, well, let beholders to the throne?

We sincerely hope that the appointment of Saludo as CSC chair is not one of GMA's shameless acts to further consolidate her power. Otherwise his appointment will certainly serve a big blow to the civil service and to the public sector unions that are critical of the excesses of partisan politics, erosion of professionalism and the rise of corruption in the civil service. Self-serving politics must be kept out of the civil service!

—ANABEL ENRIQUEZ-LABOR, general secretary, Public Services Labor Independent Confederation (PSLINC), 35 Clarion Hills St., Saint Bernard Subd., Project 4, Quezon City

Schools for profit, not for education

THERE ARE NOW 11 BILLIONAIRES of Krimerl comers in the Philippines, whose original networths of four years were extended to five years. Why? Although 15 countries here are still four-year courses in the world's best colleges.

The fifth year for those courses can only be justified if the colleges can prove that the students are learning more than enough to compensate for this extra sacrifice. The schools have not proven that, either can be expected to the opposite. If the DOE, CHED, Medical Association (PMA) assume a pay indication, only 39 percent of its graduates pass the board examination compared to 68 percent of the graduates of four-year courses. Incredible? There refer to a simple analysis of the results of examinations at professionexamreviewers.com. The statistics are from the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC).

The only "justification" being peddled around for the extra year is that we have a "weak" primary and secondary education system. That argument is moronic, the DOE course being in demonstrate only when the BEC year was added in the 1960s.

Who decided to add the fifth year to four engineering courses? Were there scientific academic research studies done? Or was the impetus to the deliberations on the "four-year extension"?

There were no valid studies presented to support the need for the extra year. It is only proper for the incumbent to school to refrain its duties in the event of all four-year courses to their four-year curricula. Since the added subjects are irrelevant to the BS courses, the clear intent is just to increase the number of unearned units. See what inefficient schools—both private schools, which were established with a noble goal—to provide quality education...have yielded to the lures of profit making.

—DARE VICENTE, 1600 Bruce Blvd., Manila

Rice crisis and the late Rafael Salas

SOME 41 YEARS AGO, THE FIRST dean of the Sociological School of Arts and Trade were singing the classic "Planting Rice" song with new lyrics ("The World of Rafael Salas, Farmer and Management in the Global Village" by Nick Joaquin):

"Bring down the price of rice,/Or we are not able to live/Not the promise you can't meet./

Not the rice we cannot eat!"

Later, the National Media Production Center (NMPC) came up with a new version for singing in classrooms, in public and private schools, to wit:

"Planting rice is lots of fun,/Rice for all—and everyone/Let's all join and all the fold./

Plenty good life for all your yield.

It's so nice, planning rice times or twice or even thrice; let's all join hand in hand/Can't please rice for our dear lord?"

The author for the singing of the NMPC lyrics was trained in the office of then Executive Secretary Rafael M. Salas, a management expert, tasked by then President Ferdinand Marcos, to head the rice self-sufficiency program. In 1967, less than two years as head of the program, Salas made the country self-sufficient in rice, with production surpluses even.

But when Salas left for the first of Nations Food for Population before (Unfpa), the country's rice problems did back to square one.

Has the country run out of technocrats like Executive Salas who are capable of fixing the current problem on rice?

—CLARO G. EBDIS, Labor, Indias, Mountain Province

GMA, GSIS for power consumers

IN HIS DESIRE FOR REASON solutions, Rural C. Pangalangan, apparently overstepped the bounds of reason. ("Who Mendez, who's side from gov't bullying?" Inquirer, 5/22/08) He attributes to "political vendetta" the government's efforts in bringing down the cost of electric power in the said Mendez of the three areas of Metro Manila and surrounding provinces. The franchise covers 6 million customers.

It's the old con game of mind-numbing Manila's elite to have acquired the divine power of mind-reading so that if they don't like a particular person they can attribute bad motives to whatever that person does. As a lawyer, Pangalangan should know that in court he is required to produce hard evidence. However, as a columnist he ignores the evidence. That is an insult to the intelligence of his readers.

But two can play this game. One can also attribute bad motives to Pangalangan's every utterance. That's unfair to him but it is what bred. Instead, we will display our reasoned for reasons, but a passion for facts.

Fact one: In asking Mendez to bring down its electricity rates, President Macapagal-Arroyo is clearly acting in the interest not only of the 1 million customers of Meralco, but also of all power consumers in the entire country. Meralco's high electricity rates have made the Philippine cost competitive in the world economy turning off potential investors, and thus depriving millions of Filipinos of opportunities for employment and the enjoyment of progress.

Fact two: The government's crusade to bring down Meralco rates, led by GSIS president and general manager Winston Garcia, has exposed inefficiency, corruption and irresponsibility in Meralco's operations. Comedians Sen. Sep. Luis Villafuerte has exposed Mendez's "sweetheart deals" with power producers affiliated with the Lopezes who control the Meralco management. The Ayala candidate in the payment by Meralco of P1.2 billion for underdelivered power, a fantastic sum passed on to its customers, Villafuerte said. The supreme court has also found Mendez guilty of overcharging its customers by P36 billion for income taxes its management should have paid.

Fact three: The unjust charging to customers of "systems losses" amounting to billions of pesos has been exposed. This has prompted Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. to file a bill prohibiting this practice by Mendez and other public utility companies. Sen. Juan Ponce-Enrile has also filed a bill amending the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira) to prevent such abuses on customers as practiced by Mendez.

But four: President Arroyo and GSIS' Garcia have denied over and over again that government does not intend to take over Mendez. All they want to change—to a better, more efficient, more transparent and honest management, to find fault!

The sending public reports to media commentators not only to be reasonable in their comments, but also to protect the public from profit-greedy businessmen. The President, in accordance with her mandate, is protecting the public interest. Pangalangan doing the same thing?

—ELI RENDEZ, ejmendez.08@gmail.com

Across the NATION

Cops figure in another doubtful killing

NEWSBRIEFS

■ CAMP DANGWA, Benguet

Armed men seize P3M in payroll money

ARMED men wearing ski masks and bonnets ran off with at least P3 million in payroll money for provincial employees in Kabayan town in Apayao on Tuesday, reports reaching the Cordillera police said.

Chief Supt. Eugene Martin, Apayao police director, said the robbers stopped the vehicle of provincial treasurer Conrado Bipilan when it reached Barangay Lemeng at about 1 p.m. (Manila time), accompanied by two police escorts and two government employees, but just left with them P3.038 million from the Land Bank of the Philippines branch in Luna town and was on its way to the capital.

Police reports showed that policemen and civilians engaged the robbers in a shootout in Barangay Balatoc in Kabayan at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, but the robbers escaped.

Joel Cimatu Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ DIGOS CITY

12 kids hospitalized for eating jatropha nuts

AT LEAST a dozen children were hospitalized in the Davao del Sur Provincial Hospital for suspected poisoning after eating jatropha nuts on Tuesday.

Dr. Ma. Luz Torres said intravenous medication alleviated the conditions of the children, aged 5 to 12, from Barangay Digos, who suffered from severe stomach pains. Only four of them were still hospitalized due to severe dehydration.

Jatropha, commonly known as bute-bute, is poisonous when ingested by humans and animals. It is commonly cultivated for its oil content, which is used in the manufacture of automotive or industrial lubricants.

Orlando B. Dilag, Inquirer Mindanao

■ BACOLOD CITY

P100-M prison facility to rise in Bago City

A P100-MILLION prison facility will be built in Bago City under a memorandum of agreement signed by Negros Occidental Governor Isabelo Zayco and Chief Supt. Rosendo Dial, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology head, on Monday.

The Negros Occidental Investigation and Facility will rise on a three-hectare property in Barangay Tabunan, Zayco said. The provincial government will have total control and management of the facility to the BJMP after three years or upon enactment of a law for the transfer of jurisdiction.

The province has been spending P35 million a year in running the provincial jail, Zayco said.

Carlo P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

■ LUCENA CITY

Army recovers NPA firearms

ARMY soldiers on Monday recovered firearms in a clandestine farm in Sariaya, which they believed to belong to communist rebels operating in the Lamon Bay area, according to a spokesperson of the soldiers's Southern Luzon Command based in Camp Rafael Ileto.

"Concerned civilians led us with the Sariaya Municipal Army's collection of the so-called homemade-type ripped-off Army soldiers on the location of the hidden firearms to the remote village of San Isidro Kanluran," said Capt. Lou Santiago.

The troops retrieved two M-16 rifles, two hand grenades, three short rifle magazines, and a handcaliber for M-16 bullets, Santiago said.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

By Nina Catherine Calleja and Maricar Cinco
Inquirer Southern Luzon

CALAMBA CITY—A SUSPECTED LEADER OF A robbery-holdup group was gunned down in an alleged shootout with 21 policemen here on Thursday, while two of his followers were arrested two hours later in Sto. Tomas town in Batangas.

Mostacio Tolentino, 46, was killed in his house by members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) regional operations group, mobile group and provincial office, said Supt. Primitivo Talusan, head of the intelligence division in Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon).

The lawmen were conducting search and seizure operations in Barangay Parian (Lagro for the arrest warrants issued by Judge Cesar Mangibinhay of the regional trial court in Imus, Cavite, following the May 16 robbery of a Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC) branch in Calauan, Laguna, in which nine employees and one client were nonetheless killed.

But relatives said Tolentino was killed at the back of his own cornn house at around 6 a.m.

His nephews, Mark Ryan, 18, who immediately rushed to the scene upon hearing the gunshots, said around 30 policemen hastily opened the front door and seized his uncle from his room. Struggling against the intruders, Tolentino was able to move to the room of his 16-year-old daughter, he said.

"The daughter grabbed her father so as not to be taken, but the policemen pulled him away," Mark Ryan said. "He would have not fought back because his daughter was there. He would have even gone with them [police], he said.

He said the victim was handcuffed and dragged to the back of the house. Neighbors said they heard 30 to 45 gunshots.

But Barangay chair Rodolfo Belden, who arrived at around 6 a.m., said they were to handcuffs and that Tolentino lay dead inside a grass. He said two .45 cal. pistols were recovered on his hands.

"He is the same as civilian guard at Ayala Greenfield Estates, but Belden said he was a caretaker.

Tolentino and the other suspects "had previous records and robbery cases dismissed by the local courts," Talusan said.

Tolentino's alleged companions, Gary Tumambing and Victorio Mostacio, were arrested in Barangay San Isidro in Sto. Tomas and held at Camp Vicente Lim.

The policemen shot and killed Tolentino because he was engaging them in a firefight, Talusan said. "The team was just about to serve a surveillance when our men heard gunshots," he said.

Although Talusan clarified that Tolentino and the two arrested suspects were not part of the RCBC heist and that the search operations were not carried out by the RCBC task force, Chief Supt. Roberto Padilla, regional police director, said the recovered firearms would be subjected to ballistics test to determine if they matched with the evidences found at the bank.

A number of pistols and high-caliber firearms and ammunitions were found in the homes of Tolentino, Mostacio and Tumambing, police reported.

On Monday, the Commission on Human Rights said the killing of three suspects by the RCBC Task Force in Tanauan City in Batangas was a riderous operation and cast the result of a shootout.

At Camp Crame in Quezon City, the PNP confirmed yesterday that it had in fact arrested two suspects in the bloody RCBC heist. Three other suspects were already identified, it said.

But PNP spokesperson, Chief Supt. Nicasio Bartolome, refused to give their names.

The five will be charged with multiple murder and robbery he said. *With a report from Alexis Pajo in Manila.*

CONSUMERS queue for NFA rice at the agency's outlet at the Rizal Park in Digos City. *Nonoy Lacson, Inquirer Mindanao*

Steep rice prices send Digos folk to NFA line

DIGOS CITY—SIXTY-THREE mothers—most recently laid to rest—left crumpled in many people shared faith either in the long line of buyers of cheap government rice at the Rizal Park here yesterday following this week's sudden increase in the staple's commercial prices.

At least 200 people were queuing up for 50th Dedicated Rural Assistance) rice as the agency tried to regulate its selling by issuing priority numbers. The restrictions were later lifted.

From Monday's P37 a kilo, some varieties of commercial rice are now being sold at P45.

Carmelita Espinosa, a buyer from Lapu-Lapu District, said she arrived at 5 a.m. only to find others much ahead of her. She did not mind waiting, she said, but what pained her was when another hopeful showed her away.

Wilfredo Jumawid said she could understand why some were trying to "influence" their way into the line. "They could not afford commercial rice anymore so they would do everything to get their share of 700, rice at P18.25 per kilo," she said.

Yasmin Villanueva was one of those who did not have breakfast. "The rats [allusion to going in hungry] will be hard," she said.

Aurito Dyang, senior investigation and enforcement officer of the NFA, said the agency had been limiting the volume that a person could purchase because it had to ensure that supply would not run out during the lean months.

Only 37 sacks of subsidized rice were being sold at the Rizal Park outlet, he said. This, he said, would mean two kilos per consumer.

Residents urged officials to do something about the steep increase in the prices of commodities. The Department of Trade and Industry said it could only do so much.

Manny Olivar, DTI provincial supervisor, said it should be the Department of Agriculture and the NFA which should check on the prices.

Senior Manderson, NFA provincial manager, said his office would investigate the matters to determine if they were hoarding. *Orlando B. Dilag and Elbin Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao*

DOH stops own probe of rectal surgery

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

CEBU CITY—THE DEPARTment of Health in Central Visayas has given way to the Visayas Ombudsman in its investigation into the rectal surgery scandal that involved six medical practitioners of the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center (VSMMC).

The DOH hearing committee yesterday granted a resolution for the official turnover of records of the case to the ombudsman's body, said Dr. Angelita Infante, the regional department's officer in charge and committee chair.

Infante said the administrative investigation was suspended following an order issued by Health Undersecretary Alexander Padilla.

The administrative case involved two doctors and four nurses of the VSMMC who were accused of conducting a 20-second rectal surgery on Jan. 3 to remove a canister of perfume smuggled in his rectum. Jhunnex Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas

GMA inaugurates vegetable trading post in Quezon town

By Gaille T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

SARIAYA, QUEZON—FORMER Pulse Girl ended his short speech, most down the stairs of the stage for his seat, but immediately turned back and walked straight to the arrayed program guest, President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"Your, I think a minute, the President," he announced out and thank my hand very tightly. He seemed very happy for my mentor," he told the long row in Filipino.

Hell is among the more than 500 "farm managers" in the second district of Quezon province that the Sariaya Pamilihan ng Gulay Foundation Inc. (SPNGFI) has enlisted as partners in achieving its goal of creating cooperative farmer-entrepreneurs for rural development.

On Wednesday, Ms. Arroyo formally inaugurated the SPNGFI's one-of-a-kind "regional rural trading post"—a centralized buying, selling and distribution station for farmers' produce.

"This SPNGFI is one successful example of progress and development every time the government and our people help together," she said in her speech before some 3,000 people, mostly farmers.

Hell, who once described himself as "barely indebted" to some people in his village of Mangalang Ibaba Sur, has already paid his P50,000 loan in full to the foundation—without any interest—from proceeds of harvest from his half-hectare rented farm.

"I netted more than P300,000 as profit. Thanks to the Sariaya Pamilihan," he told the President in his speech.

The SPNGFI is a nonstock, nonprofit and nongovernment group initiated by Quezon Rep. Proceso Alcala (second district) in early 2006, through the Philippine Community and Ecological Services Organization (Pheonse), when he was still a private person.

Aside from being a marketing center, it provides interest-free loans to farmers to cover their needs during the planting season and technical assistance to them, particularly the latest, proven farming methods to increase crop production.

Ms. Arroyo handed to Alcala a certificate of ownership for a cold storage and reefer truck from the Department of Agriculture, a P5-million check for the second phase of the fourth Luzon Trade University (SLTU), another P3 million for the construction of farm-to-market roads in Sariaya, and hybrid seeds and fertilizer.

Land certificates

She also distributed certificates of land ownership award to more than 100 beneficiaries of the government agrarian reform program in the town of Sariaya, Candelaria and Tiaong, and certificates of awarded rights for 113 hectares to Manobo Tribes under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Protected Area Community-Based Resource Management Agreement.

Nautical highway's municipal tax stopped

By Alex Pal
Inquirer Visayas

DUMAGUETE CITY—"MUNICipal (tax), sh," the collector explains as he gets P20 from the car driver, marking a motorist just before the exit to the southbound section of the government's much-vaunted nautical highway.

The growing line becomes familiar to drivers of vehicles running from Negros Oriental and coming through the highway's port of entry to Santander town in southern Cebu.

Its passengers of forties crossing to Negros, the individual "municipal tax" is a P2 charge for which they use issued cash slips spot giving them tickets.

Most drivers say obligingly but many are upset at having to pay more—with a reason. The levy is, after all, illegal—and already irritating.

Highway robbery

"This is really highway robbery," said a long-time traveler between Dumaguete and Cebu, who asked to remain anonymous.

Santander is one of 65 local government units all over the country that are collecting the illegal fees, according to Dr. Emmanuel Buella, a professor of economics at the University of Asia and the Pacific, who serves as a consultant to the toll-on roll-off (Bella) operations of the Strong Republic Nautical Highway (SRNH) projects of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The local government line included this provision in a tax ordinance passed recently in a bid to institutionalize the charge.

"LGUs are really not allowed to collect these kinds of taxes because it's not within their taxing power," Buella explained. He said that Provision 133.E of the Local Government Code specifically prohibits the collection of taxes for vehicles passing through municipal territories because this constitutes an exercise of trade.

GMA irked

The issue has already reached—and irked—Mr. Arroyo, according to Secretary Cerge Remonde, head of the Presidential Management Staff, who met representatives in a press conference last week at Palacio Gran Hotel in Cebu City.

Remonde claims the Pro-Poor Economic System Steering Committee, which ensures transparency and completion of priority infrastructure projects by 2010.

Remonde said steps had already been taken to ensure that travelers would no longer have to pay "unnecessary" fees.

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2007 GSIS Results of Operations

Assets

GSIS consolidated total assets (unaudited) as of December 2007 amounted to P441.44 billion, P31.77 billion higher than 2006 assets. The marked improvement was attributed to the growth in the Social Insurance Fund, which posted an increase of P34.28 billion to P410.09 billion from the previous year's P375.82 billion.

The SIF is the source of the social insurance benefits of GSIS' over 1.5 million members, and thus makes up the bulk of the System's consolidated assets.

The Administered Funds, on the other hand, is made up of the General Insurance Fund (General Insurance Business, Optional Life Insurance Business, and Pre-need Insurance Business), the Employees' Compensation Fund, the Retirement Insurance Officials' Fund and the Property Replacement Fund. Together, these funds accounted for P31.36 billion in assets for 2007.

The net increase in assets reflected the success of the reforms that have strengthened the overall viability of the System. This, in turn, gave the strong assurance to GSIS members and pensioners of the receipt of their benefits as and when they fall due.

Income

The GSIS posted consolidated revenues of P86.34 billion in 2007, an increase of P1.75 billion over 2006 gross revenues of P84.6 billion on the back of higher insurance revenues of P48.42 billion, up by P2.64 billion compared with 2006 figures of P45.77 billion.

Net operating revenues for 2007 stood at P83.62 billion, approximating the P40.94 billion net profit posted in 2006. During the year, GSIS paid higher claims and benefits to members amounting to P35.89 billion or an increase of P1.24 billion compared with 2006 level of P32.67 billion. This showed that, while significantly disbursing claims and benefits to members, the System was able to maintain a healthy level of net operating revenues that remained one of the highest in the government sector.

Reserves and Surplus

The year 2007 saw reserves inching up to P420.71 billion, from P376.09 billion in 2006. This represented an increase of P44. 62 billion, or 13.9% hike compared with the P38.36 billion registered during the year before. Surplus for 2007, on the other hand, reached P9.27 billion.

Expenses

Total expenditures for 2007 reached P45.71 billion, as against P43.66 billion in the previous year. The higher expenditures for the year is mainly largely attributed to the bigger social insurance claims paid during the year and the higher administrative and operating expenses which grew by P1.20 billion and P2.05 billion, respectively. The accelerated 10% increase in wages accounted for the upward movement in administrative and operating expenses.

Life and Retirement Benefits

The GSIS paid out a total of P 32.798 billion in claims and benefits in 2007. Claims for social insurance benefits of 116,783 members aggregated to P32.303 billion. These were benefits paid for retirement, life insurance, survivorship and other social insurance claims. . On the other hand, Optional and Unlimited Optional life insurance claims reached P489 million.

Loans to Members

The GSIS granted a total of P54.630 billion in loans to its members through the eCardPlus, posting an increase of P21.295 billion or 63.8 percent over the P33.32 billion disbursed in 2006. .

The roll-out of the Consolidated Loan to Cover loan proved to be a roaring success. The loan is availed of by accessing a G/SWIPE Kiosk with the use of the member's eCard Plus. The Agency Assistant Officer (AAO) approves the loan, GSIS transmits the electronic message to the bank to credit the account of the member and presently are withdrawn from any ATM. In 2007, the Conso-loans availed by 467, 316 members amounted to P30.816 billion.

On the other hand, regular and optional policy loans granted to 362,961 members amounted to P7.25 billion.

Some 32,342 members opted to avail of the regular salary loans in the first quarter of the year and this amounted to P2.209 billion, while restructured salary for the year amounted to P140.38 million.

Pension loans continued to be a popular source of additional funds for the pensioners. A total of P1.440 billion was availed by 31, 237 qualified pensioners.

A total of P4.646 billion was disbursed for the P50,000 cash advance facility availed by members who enrolled for their eCard Plus in 2007.

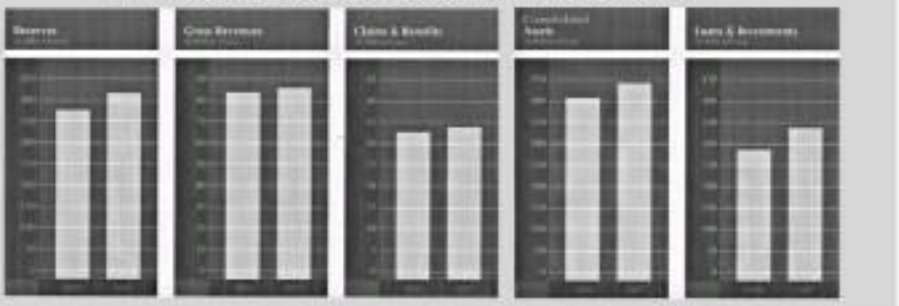
Annual Dividends and Cash Gifts

In 2007, the dividends of regular and optional life insurance policy holders were credited to their eCard Plus. Dividends distributed for regular policy holders amounted to P776 million while P95 million were distributed to optional policy holders.

Meanwhile, qualified pensioners received a total of P858 million in cash gifts, representing an increase of 54.8% from the amount paid in 2006.

GSIS turns 71

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS Operating Performance



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Tell-all book exposes Washington's world of spin

JUDGE THIS BOOK BY ITS COVER The cover of the soon-to-be-released memoir written by former White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan is shown on Thursday. "He's just disgruntled," the White House retorted. AFP

WASHINGTON—IN A WHITE House full of Bush loyalists, none was more loyal than Scott McClellan, the bland press secretary who spread the company line for all the government is follies each day. His word, it turns out, was worthless, his credibility a mirage, a glimpse into Washington's world of spin and even outright deception.

Instead of effective government, Americans were subjected to a "permanent campaign" that was "all about manipulation, big sources of public opinion to the president's advantage," McClellan writes in a book arousing fire in harsh criticism of President George W. Bush.

"Presidential initiatives from health care programs to foreign economic aid regularly devised, turned, timed and launched with a keen eye for their impact on the electoral calendar."

The spokesperson's book is called "What Happened: Inside the Bush White House and Washington's Culture of Deception."

Propaganda not truth

Governing via endless campaigning is not a new phenomenon, but it accelerated markedly during the years the Clinton White House and then the war-shadowed years of the Bush administration. Bush strategist Karl Rove had a defining hand in both politics and governing as overseer of key offices, including not only openly political offices and long-range strategic planning but seemingly basic aspects of governmental affairs, leaning on state and local officials.

Bush's presidency "normalized and entrenched as the off-season by excessively embracing the permanent campaign and its tactics," McClellan writes, saying Bush relied on an aggressive "political propaganda campaign" instead of the truth to sell the Iraq war.

What is about right, says Brookings Institution political analyst Thomas Mann, coauthor of a book called "The Permanent Campaign."

"It was such a tipped-up effort to frame the problem and the dilemma in a way that really didn't do justice to the complexity of the arguments," the intelligence," Mann says in an interview.

Though all presidents try to "control the message," Mann says, "it was really a way of presenting that circumvents. It just had enormously harmful consequences. I think they carried it to a level not heretofore seen."

Each day, underscoring the daily blend of politics and government, Bush and his administration make an extraordinary effort to control information and make sure the White House message is spread across the government and beyond.

The line for officials to follow is set at senior staff meetings at the White House early in the morning, then streamlined in e-mails, conference calls, hasty and meetings. The loop extends to Congress where lawmakers get the administration talking points to go do friendly interest groups and others.

Storm at the top

The aim is to get them all to say the same thing, unwavering from the administration line. Cabinet administrators have tried to do the same thing, but some has been so disciplined in the Bush White House.

It starts at the top.

McClellan recounts how Bush, as governor of Texas, spelled out his approach about the press in a meeting the morning in 1994, his days Bush "mentioned some of his expectations for his spokesperson—the importance of staying on message, the need to talk about what you're for, rather than what you are against, how he liked to make the top news on his own time frame and terms without his spokespeople getting out in front of him, and, finally, making sure that public statements were coordinated internally so that everyone is always on the same page and there are few surprises."

In September 2002, Bush's chief economic adviser, Larry Lindsey, ran afoul of the president's rules by saying the cost of a possible war with Iraq could be somewhere between $100 billion and $200 billion. Bush was irritated and made sure that Lindsey who told his comments were unacceptable.

"Lindsey had violated the first rule of the disciplined, on-message Bush White House: Don't make news unless you're authorized to do so," McClellan writes.

Bush misled America

Within four months, Lindsey was gone, resigning as part of a reshaping of Bush's economic team.

While message control has been part of many administrations, Mann says that "[key] members of Bush's team] were just tougher and more disciplined about it than anyone else had been."

As spokesperson, McClellan ardently defended Bush's decision to invade Iraq and the conduct of his presidency over the course of nearly 300 briefings in two years and 16 months. Now, two years after leaving the White House and eager to make money on his book, McClellan concludes Bush turned away from candor and honesty and misled the country about the reasons for going to war.

In an oral about Saddam Hussein's supposed weapons of mass destruction, McClellan writes, it was Bush's favor to threaten the Middle East through the spread of democracy.

"Although the war was necessary," writes McClellan, who never hinted at any doubts or questioned his talking points when he was press secretary.

McClellan writes that Bush and his team sold the Iraq war by means of a "political propaganda campaign" in which contradictory evidence was ignored or discarded, caveats or qualifications or arguments were downplayed or dropped and "a dubious allegation reconceived to ring very played-up."

"We were more focused on creating a sense of gravity and urgency about the threat from Saddam Hussein than governing on the basis of the facts of the situation," McClellan wrote.

Harshest tell-all book

McClellan is not the first presidential spokesperson to write a tell-all book, but his is certainly the harshest, at least in recent memory. He says his words as press secretary were sincere but he has come to realize that "some of them were factually misguided. . . . I've tried to come to grips with some of the truths that life inside the White House has hidden observed."

White House colleagues were stunned, but not lacking for the day's response. "We are puzzled. It is sad. This is not the Scott we knew," said Dana Perino, the current press secretary who was first hired by McClellan as a deputy.

Later in the day, Perino enjoyed the exercise of Bush himself. "He's puzzled, he doesn't recognize this as the Scott McClellan that he hired and socialized in and roomed with for so many years." AP

Ex-Bush spokesperson bashes president . . .

From page A1

candor and accountingness to admit mistakes.

In the first major insider account of the Bush White House, one-time spokesperson Scott McClellan calls the operation "tensive, secretive and coordinative" and says it veered inextricably off course as a result.

The White House responded angrily on Wednesday to McClellan's unprecedented memoir, calling it self-serving sour grapes.

"Scott, we now know, is disgruntled about his experience at the White House," said current White House Press Secretary Dana Perino, a former deputy to McClellan. "We are puzzled. It is sad. This is not the Scott we knew."

McClellan was the fifth White House press secretary to step down since 1988, the second of four to do so in Bush's presidency.

McClellan reveals that he was pushed to leave earlier than he had planned, and he displays some bitterness about that as well as about being sometimes kept out of the loop on key decisions making sessions.

He excludes himself from major involvement in some of what he calls the Bush administration's biggest blunders, for instance the decision to go to war and the initial campaign as well that decision in the American people. But he does not spare himself entirely saying, "I left for short of living up to the kind of public servant I wanted to be."

Act of contrition

McClellan explains his dramatic shift from defender to critic as a difficult act of personal contrition, a way to learn from his mistakes, be true to his Christian faith and become a better person.

He includes criticisms of reporters whose questions he disliked. The news media, he says, were "complicit enablers" for focusing more on "covering the march to war instead of the necessity of war."

And McClellan issues this disclaimer about Bush: "I do not believe he or his White House deliberately or consciously sought to deceive the American people."

But most everything else he writes comes awfully close to making just that assertion, all the more stunning coming from someone who had been one of the longest serving of the band of loyalists to come to Washington with Bush from Texas.

Heart of the book

The heart of the book concerns Bush's decision to go to war in Iraq, a determination McClellan says the president had made by early 2002—at least a full year before the invasion.

He signed off on a strategy for selling the war that was less than candid and honest," McClellan writes in "What Happened: Inside the Bush White House and Washington's Culture of Deception."

The book quickly vaulted to No. 1 on Amazon.com's Hot seller list.

McClellan says Bush's main reason for war always was "an ambitious and idealistic post-9/11 vision of transforming the Middle East through the spread of freedom."

Insulated from reality

But Bush and his advisers made "a marketing choice" to downplay this rationale in favor of one focused on increasingly trumped-up portrayals of the threat posed by the weapons of mass destruction.

During the "political propaganda campaign to sell the war to the American people," Bush used his team's zeal to make the "White House and the Iraqi connection to terrorism appear just a little more certain, a little less questionable than they were."

MCCLELLAN: White House press secretary from May 2003 to April 2006. AFP

Something else was downplayed as well—any discussion of "the possible unpleasant consequences of war—casualties, economic effects, geopolitical risks, diplomatic repercussions," McClellan says.

In Bush's second term, as news from Iraq grew worse, McClellan says the president was "insulated from the reality of events on the ground and consequently began telling [on the top of believing his own spin."

All of this sets a "serious moral blunder" that sum Bush's presidency "terribly off course."

"The Iraq war was not necessary," McClellan concludes.

Seeds of greatness

McClellan leaves in portrait of Bush as possessing "personal charm, wit and enormous political skill." He says Bush's administration early on possessed "seeds of greatness."

But McClellan ticks off a long list of Bush's weaknesses—someone with a penchant for self-deception if it "suits his needs at the moment," "an inattentive leader more than an influential leader" who has a lack of interest in delving deeply into complex issues, a tendency a lack of self-confidence that makes him unable to acknowledge when he's been wrong.

McClellan is most scathing on the topic of the administration's embrace of secrecy).

"The Bush administration lacked real accountability in Iraqi part because Bush himself did not embrace openness or government to the consultation," he writes.

Top advisers slammed

Three top Bush advisers come in for harsh criticism.

McClellan calls Vice President Dick Cheney "the magic man" who "always seemed to get his way" and wondering "simply, and not entirely his deep-seated conflicts, even arrogance, to the detriment of the president."

Also "was more interested in figuring out where the president stood and just steering on his wishes while expending only necessary effort on helping him understand all the considerations and potential consequences" of any.

McClellan predicts "history will likely judge her harshly."

Ethical limits

And former Bush political guru Karl Rove "always struck me as the kind of person who would be willing, to the limit of battle, to push the envelope to the limit of what is permissible ethically or legally."

The White House was severely damaged by blunders beyond the war, McClellan says.

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in August 2005, the administration "gave an inexplicit "rather than seizing the initiative and getting in front of what was happening on the ground."

In the wake of the tell-all book dominated the airwaves, McClellan got a taste of life on the other side.

The White House and a right-lent group

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Inquirer is still No. 1

From page A1

Synovate's Nationwide Urban Media Asia Survey 2007-2008 Wave 1 was conducted from January to December 2007 and had a margin of error of plus-or-minus 2 percentage points.

From Monday to Saturday the Inquirer led inside and outside the Greater Manila area, with an average readership of over 333,000 in GMA and over 306,000 in areas outside GMA, according to Synovate.

The first lead as estimated readership of over 486,000 in GMA and over 84,000 outside GMA. The Bulletin had nearly 450,000 and about 68,000 readers inside and outside GMA.

Sunday Inquirer

The Synovate survey also found the Inquirer Sunday edition to be leading in areas outside GMA with over 50,000 estimated readership—more than double that of the Star's Crossby 40,000) and about three-fourths more than the Bulletin's (nearly 31,000).

While the survey showed the Inquirer to be the leading newspaper in GMA from Monday to Saturday, the Bulletin attracted more readers in the area on Sunday.

The Bulletin's Sunday issue had an estimated readership of over 640,000 in GMA, followed by the Inquirer with over 533,000 and the Star with around 446,000.

Cities covered

The Greater Manila area covered by the survey included Metro Manila and the adjacent areas of Antipolo and Cainta in Rizal, Bacoor in Cavite, Meycauayan in Bulacan and San Pedro in Laguna.

Other areas in Luzon covered by the survey were the cities of Angeles, San Fernando, Olongapo, Batangas, Calapan, Dagupan, Lucena, Legazpi, Naga, Olongapo and Tuguegarao in Luzon.

The survey was also conducted in the Visayan cities of Bacolod, Iloilo, Roxas, Tacloban, Tagbilaran, Cebu, Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue.

In Mindanao, the survey covered the cities of Butuan, Cagayan de Oro, Davao City, General Santos and Zamboanga.

First time

This is the first time Synovate has released nationwide results. In its previous survey results, which only covered GMA and responders belonging to classes ABCD, the Inquirer also came out on top.

In results released in July last year, the Inquirer emerged as the English daily newspaper of choice of almost half of the respondents (46 percent) who read English daily newspapers in the Greater Manila area. This translated to an estimated readership of over 834,000 from the ABCD classes in GMA.

Cebu Daily News, Libre

In the Visayas, the latest Synovate survey found that the Cebu Daily News was the second most-read regional newspaper, next to Sunstar Cebu. It put the readership of Cebu Daily News at over 10,000 on weekdays and over 9,000 on Sundays.

Inquirer Libre, a free newspaper with an average daily circulation of 118,000, registered an average readership per issue of over 189,000 in GMA.

Inquirer Libre is distributed for free in **the stations of Light Railway Transit Line 2**, the Metro Railway Transit, the Superferry and selected McDonald's stores between 6 and 10 a.m.

Dominant TV

The latest Synovate survey also found that television remained the dominant media, with nearly all respondents (98 percent) saying they had watched TV the preceding week.

Radio reach was at 50 percent, while the percentage of those with internet access was at 36 percent.

As for gadget ownership, four of every five (82 percent) of those surveyed owned DVD players. Seventy percent owned mobile phones without Internet access, while about two in every five (41 percent) had a mobile phone with Internet.

About half owned MP3 players or iPods (55 percent), desktop computers (47 percent) and digital cameras (47 percent).

The Synovate survey covered 4,800 respondents aged 15 to 64 belonging to socioeconomic classes ABCDE. They were asked about their media consumption, ownership of a range of products, lifestyle, values and attitudes.

Synovate used mixed survey methodologies for the Media 4Asia. Computer-assisted telephone interviews as well as face-to-face interviews were conducted among respondents from the upper and lower classes, respectively.

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Bus hostage-taker kills man, is slain

By Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon and Thea Oliveria, INQUIRER.net

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—A lone gunman yesterday shot two male passengers on a bus and held eight others—all women—hostage, forcing some of them to strip naked, before police killed him with a shot in the head, officials said.

One of the two wounded passengers later died, police said.

The almost five-hour hostage drama in Lubao, Pampanga, ended after one of two policewomen accompanying the chief negotiator shot dead the gunman inside a Roman-based bus.

Senior Supt. Rizlih Binglay, acting Pampanga police director, said the policeman shot hostage taker Rey Digo after the latter supposedly grabbed the gun of Supt. Ribelin Mangahinan, Lubao police chief and lead negotiator, and poked it at him.

Binglay had yet to identify the policeman who shot Digo at 5:20 p.m. inside the Genesis bus, where Digo held his fellow bus hostages, two of them children.

"I will have to wait for the report of Col. Mangahinan," Binglay told the Inquirer.

Mangahinan, tailed by two policemen, had boarded the bus to talk with Digo.

"Digo[ ] grabbed my gun and he turned his gun at me. We struggled and one of my men shot him," Binglay quoted Mangahinan as saying.

Mangahinan evaded talking to reporters.

HOSTAGE TAKER Rey Digo (second from right) watches over the three women he is holding hostage on a bus as a police negotiator (partly hidden, left) tries to talk to him.

Problems with wife

Mangahinan said police decided to take action because "it was getting dark and it would have been even more dangerous" had the hostage situation been allowed to continue.

Digo was armed with a .38 caliber pistol still loaded with several rounds, police said.

Police said Digo had been having problems with his wife.

"He was angry with his wife and we were worried he might start shooting again," a police official said on television. "I called his wife to Negros but he did not want to speak to her, saying she was no good [making him]."

"Because he was angry, he made the women in the bus strip down to his underwear, ordering them to take off their bras and panties," the official said, adding Digo later agreed to let them put their clothes back on.

Digo, said to be 35 years old, was shot dead almost five hours after he started to take the hostages at 1:40 p.m. while inside the bus.

He ordered the drivers to push the bus along Barangay Lourdes, Lubao portion of the Jose Abad Santos Avenue (formerly Rio Grande-Sta. Rita/Guagua-Olongapo Road).

The bus, which left Pasay City on Thursday noon, carried 32 passengers. Digo boarded the bus in Lubao, Quezon City.

Prior to the shooting, Digo released two girls and an elderly woman.

Locked in the bus

Mangahinan said that Digo had not demanded anything in exchange for the release of the five remaining victims.

He locked himself and his hostages inside the bus.

All that Digo said was that he had a problem with his wife. The man was reported to be a native of Negros.

Binglay said that Digo seemed already relaxed prior to the shooting and this was why he thought it all right to enter the bus and negotiate with him.

According to the bus conductor, Jeffrey Mamangkhan, Digo started firing his gun when the bus reached Barangay Lourdes in Lubao.

Three passengers were hit by bullets and were taken to a hospital in Gerona town. Binglay later said one of them, Osmer Llagas, 48, of Villa Hermia, San Carlos, had died.

Hostages crying

After Digo slumped dead along the bus' aisle, the five hostages came out, crying, shrieking as they rushed out.

Throughout the negotiation, Digo held them together in the front seats. The police gave them food as one point.

The incident stalled traffic in that part of Lubao as the police ringed the area.

The dusk ensued that had gotten worried already.

AFP gives soldier up to court

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE TURNOVER BY the military to civilian investigators of a soldier accused of killing a labor leader came as a pleasant surprise to the latter's family who thought the case was going nowhere.

The widow of labor leader Ricardo Ramos thanked the Department of Justice's Task Force against Political Violence, or Task Force 211, for its efforts in expediting the August Dy. Roderick de la Cruz.

"I never expected the case would continue. I really thought it was dismissed," Lily Ramos said reporters at a press conference called by the DOJ. Also present was Ricardo's brother Sonny.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines turned Dy in Cruz over to the National Bureau of Investigation after the task force presented military officials with the arrest warrant for the soldier issued by the Tarlac City Regional Trial Court.

Ricardo, a prominent leader, was shot dead in his home in Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac in October 2005. He headed the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union at the time. Records which is owned by the family of former President Corazon Aquino.

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The Development Bank of the Philippines will entertain Negotiated Offer on a Five Lots, Five-Storey Solely Old Building, Located at Ground Floor, DBP Head Office, San Lorenzo Cluster, Makati Avenue, Makati City for the following properties:

LOAN NO.	DESCRIPTION	AREA (sq.m.)	LOCATION	Floor Price (P)
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08-BAT-30	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-58519) with bldg. and fix.	84.00	Cataguis, Mariveles	1,260,000.00
BATANGAS				
08-BAT-37	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-58519) with bldg. and fix.	120	Brgy. 020 Lot Compound, Poblacion, Taal, Batangas	1,800,000.00
BULACAN				
08-BUL-09	Agricultural Lot (TCT No. 15437) (Not to be used for Low-cost housing)	2,100	Malamig, Meycauayan	1,155,000.00
08-BUL-11	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-107703) with bldg. and fix.	300	Lambakan, Marilao	1,170,000.00
CAMARINES NORTE				
08-CAM-03	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-14870) with bldg. and fix.	100	Lot 6, Block 4 Sitio Kalsada, Barangay Dalahican, Lucena City	270,000.00
CAVITE				
08-CAV-04	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-58291) with bldg. and fix.	100	Blk. 1 Barangay Puerto Azul, Ternate	1,200,000.00
08-CAV-05	Residential Lot (TCT No. 39828) with bldg. and fix.	150	Lot 1, Block 2, Greenfield Subd., Brgy. Salitran, Dasmariñas	900,000.00
08-CAV-06	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-58 6868) with bldg. and fix.	90	Lot 28, Block 4, Robinsons Ville 1, Evening Heights	360,000.00
08-CAV-07	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-114 5676) with bldg. and fix.	108	Lot 10, Block 1, Crescenzo Ln. Cmp., Bella Vista, Kaytitinga, Bacoor	810,000.00
08-CAV-08	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-114 5680) with bldg. and fix.	180	Lot 14, Block 7, Crescenzo Ln. Cmp., Bella Vista, Kaytitinga, Bacoor	1,350,000.00
08-CAV-09	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-114 5681) with bldg. and fix.	180	Lot 15, Block 7, Crescenzo Ln. Cmp., Bella Vista, Kaytitinga, Bacoor	1,350,000.00
08-CAV-10	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-114 5682) with bldg. and fix.	108	Lot 16, Block 7, Crescenzo Ln. Cmp., Bella Vista, Kaytitinga, Bacoor	1,296,000.00
LAGUNA				
08-LAG-01	Industrial Lot (TCT No. T-31888) with bldg. and improvements	18,284	1.5 Progress Ave. cor. Industry Drive, Carmelray Industrial Park I, Canlubang	36,568,000.00
QUEZON				
08-QUE-01	Commercial Lot (covered by old bldg. and not in inventory and appraisal)	2,000	Quezon and Gumaca City	6,000,000.00
RIZAL				
08-RIZ-04	Commercial Lot (TCT No. 86-91548) with Complex bldg.	1,140	Lot 7, Block 2 Barangay San Isidro, Binangonan	2,736,000.00
SAMAR				
08-SAM-01	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-18012) with bldg. and fix.	2,781	Brgy. Sabang, Calbayog, Mandaluyong, Tagaro City	2,084,250.00
GENERAL SANTOS				
08-GES-01	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-58519) with bldg. and fix.	84.00	Sta. Cruz Subd., General Santos City	1,260,000.00
08-GES-02	Residential Lot (TCT No. T-58519) with bldg. and fix.	100	Fatimah Subd., Sta. Fatima, General Santos City	1,500,000.00
LUCENA CITY				
08C-07-01	Residential Lot (TCT No. 2006-12) (PEI-2007) with improvements	613.5	Barangay III, Brgy. Poblacion (Dalahican)	3,220,000.00
BATANGAS				
08BC-07-01	Agro-Industrial Lot (TCT No. T-11 5-0001) with bldg. and fix.	5,000	Provincial Road, Brgy. Tabangao, Batangas	5,000,000.00
CHATTELS				
08-JAL-T-01	Various industrial molding machines (8 equipment)		1.5 Progress Ave. cor. Industry Drive, Carmelray Industrial Park I, Canlubang	1,200,000.00
08-JAL-T-02	Various machineries & equipment for Metal Iron Manufacturing Plant / Fabrication		Brgy. Bankusan, Pangil	3,813,000.00

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For More Information: ASSET MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

Supreme Court of the Philippines
Judicial and Bar Council
Manila

ANNOUNCEMENT

Commencing with Session 1, Rule 1 of the Rules of the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) 2004, as amended, the JBC will announce on 12 June 2008 (Tuesday) the qualifications of the following candidates for the position of ASSOCIATE JUSTICE OF THE COURT OF APPEALS (vice Hon. Alberto L. Suarez) at the Supreme Court Building, Padre Faura, Ermita, Manila:

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	2:00 – 5:00 p.m.
1. ABELLANOSA, FLORENCIO G.	1. GUNEO, ANTONIO LOPE G.
2. DE FERNANDO, E.	2. GUINEZ, ELY PIO DL.
3. MAGTANGGOL, ADOLF	3. REYES, JAIME S.
4. MANGUNAY, ARCADIO L.	4. VILLARAN, GORGONIO D.
5. PALAGANAS, FRANCIS E.	

The following are also candidates for the said position but were already interviewed in June and September 2007 and March 2008:

1. ARUIZ, HENRY D.	13. LAGUNDAMAN, LOTTY-ANN A.
2. BARRIOS, MANUEL M.	14. OLALIA, HILBERTO JR. T.
3. CRUZ, RAMON G.	15. PAMAGIAN, VICTORIA ISABEL S.
4. DE LEON, EDWIN JR. P.	16. PEREZ, JOSE C.
5. FRANCISCO, RAYMUNDO T.	17. PE-NUELAS, THELMA T.
6. PALELOA, CHARELITA O.	18. PERALTA, EDUARDO JR. B.
7. SABERON, SAMUEL O.	19. SALVADOR, PHILIP G.
8. SANIT, CLIFTON V.	20. SORIANO, TERESITA F.
9. SIRAULA, ANA LIZA M.	21. SORONGON, EDWIN D.
10. SIPIN, E. NIEVA T.	22. VILLANUEVA, RAUL B.
11. SITAIG, GODOFREDO S.	23. ZALAMEDA, ROSA V.
12. UCAP-ABDULMADID, P.	

The public may submit sworn complaint, written report, or opposition against any of the aforesaid candidates not later than 10 June 2008 (Tuesday) to the JBC Secretariat, 2/F Old Supreme Court Building, Supreme Court, Padre Faura St., Manila (Telefax: 552-9531; Tel. No. 552-9580; e-mail address: jbc_supremecourt@yahoo.com.ph).

Likewise, the JBC announces the opening of the following positions for application or recommendation:

1. The vacant position of Associate Justice of the Sandiganbayan due to the promotion of Hon. Diosdado M. Peralta on 29 March 2008 as Presiding Justice of the Sandiganbayan.
2. Five (5) positions of Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals due to the compulsory retirement of Hons. Bienvenido L. Reyes on 2 April 2008; and forthcoming compulsory retirement of the remaining Associate Justices Lucenito N. Tagle, Rodrigo V. Cosico, Rodrigo A. Fabian on 28 June 2008; 27 June 2008; and 4 July 2008, respectively.
3. Vacant judgeship positions in the following courts:

NCJR	**REGION III**	**REGION VI**
MANILA	**AURORA**	**ILOILO**
RTC, Br. 41	MTC, Dingalan	RTC, Br. 68, Barotac Viejo
BATAAN-CITY	1 MCTC, Casiguran-Dilasag-Dinalungan	
RTC, Br. 120	2 MCTC, Ma. Aurora-Maria Luisa	**REGION VII**
MTTC, Br. 81	**BATAANAS**	**CEBU**
PAMPANGA	MTCC, Br. 2, San Fernando City	MTCC, Br. 6, Cebu City
MTCC, Br. 2		
	REGION IV	**REGION VIII**
REGION I	**CAVITE**	**NORTHERN SAMAR**
ILOCOS	MTC, Bacoor	RTC, Br. 31, Laoang
MTC, Bauang	**RIZAL**	
PANGASI	RTC, Br. 71, Antipolo City	**REGION IX**
RTC, Br. 47, Bayaon City	**QUEZON**	**ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR**
ILOCOS SUR	MTCC, Br. 1, Lucena City	MTC, Bula
RTC, Br. 20, Vigan		
2nd MTC, Narvacan-Nagbukel-Santa	**REGION V**	**REGION XI**
MT. PROVINCE	**ALBAY**	**DAVAO DEL SUR**
RTC, Br. 34, Bontoc-Natonin	**MASBATE**	MTCC, Br. 1, Digos
PANGASINAN	RTC, Br. 49, Masbate	**DAVAO ORIENTAL**
RTC, Br. 40, Lingayen City		RTC, Br. 32, Lupon

4. Judgeship positions which will be vacant due to the compulsory or optional retirement of the incumbent judges in the following courts of the cities indicated in the parentheses:

NCJR	**REGION III**	**REGION VI**
MANILA	**BULACAN**	**ILOILO**
RTC, Br. 14 (4/14/09) (10/27/09)	RTC, Br. 23, Malolos (10/09)	MTCC, New Washington
RTC, Br. 24 (7/1/09)	RTC, Br. 84, Sta. Maria (9/2009)	**NEGROS OCC.**
RTC, Br. 39 (12/2009)		RTC, Br. 44, Bacolod City (Vice Jdc)
RTC, Br. 47 (6/2009)	**REGION IV**	
RTC, Br. 170 (9/2009)	**RIZAL**	**REGION VII**
	MTC, Binangonan (10/2009)	**CEBU**
MUNTINLUPA CITY	**QUEZON**	RTC, Br. 14, Cebu City (8/2009)
RTC, Br. 203 (6/2009)	RTC, Br. 59, Lucena City (1/2009)	RTC, Br. 16, Cebu City (2/09)
PASAY CITY	**REGION V**	**DAVAO ORIENTAL**
RTC, Br. 108 (10/2009)		RTC, Br. 44, Dumaguete City (6/2009)
QUEZON		
RTC, Br. 84, Quezon (12/2009)		
REGION II		
CAGAYAN		
RTC, Br. 03, Tuao (11/2009)		

Applications or recommendations for nos. 1, 2 position must be submitted to the JBC on or before 10 JUNE 2008 (Tuesday) and those in nos. 3-4 on or before 20 JUNE 2008 (Monday) to the JBC Secretariat, 2/F Old Supreme Court Building, Supreme Court, Padre Faura St., Manila (Tel. No. 552-9580; Telefax No. 552-9531; e-mail address: jbc_supremecourt@yahoo.com.ph). Applicants or recommendees must submit six (6) copies of the following:

Application letter or Recommendation letter with conformity of the recommendee in the latter letter or in a separate document	PDS to be submitted two (2) sets with clearances from NBI, Ombudsman, SC, Office of the Bar Confidant and employer
Personal data sheet (PDS) (Form 1 JBC-003) available from the JBC Website http://jbc.supremecourt.gov.ph)	Transcript of Records
	Police Clearance
	Certificate of Admission to the Bar with Bar Ratings
Proof of Philippine citizenship	Certificate of Good Standing or other Official Receipt from the IBP National Treasurer
10 Picture (2x2)	

30 May 2008.

(Sgd.) ATTY. LUISA D. VILLARAMA
Clerk of Court & JBC
Ex-Officio Secretary

By:

(Sgd.) FELIPE B. ADAMS
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Aplus METRO
Editor Peter G. Dipasupil

DID YOU KNOW

TODAY is the 130th birth anniversary of poet and revolutionist Fernando Ma. Guerrero, who was born in Cavite, Manila. He wrote for the revolutionary newspaper La Independencia, fought during the revolution against the Spaniards and later became a delegate to the Malolos Congress. Guerrero was the uncle of playwright-director Wilfredo Ma. Guerrero. He died in 1929. *Cyril Bonalumpay, Inquirer Research*

Researcher faces 10-20 years in jail

Accused found guilty of stealing, selling historical documents

HELPING HAND
Police Chief Insp. Geoffrido M. Velasco (center) gives tutorials to one of school youth from Mandaluyong City during a break at the launch of a project sponsored by the Unang Hakbang Foundation, a non-government organization that looks after the welfare of disadvantaged children and teenagers held at the Ateneo de Manila University yesterday in Quezon City. Velasco is one of the volunteers from the police force involved in the project. —LYNDON BOY

By Allison W. Lopez

A FORMER EMPLOYEE OF THE NATIONAL HISTORICAL Institute was sentenced in absentia yesterday to 10-20 years in prison for stealing from the National Library nearly 2,000 historical documents later sold to antique shops and collectors in the 1990s.

In a 14-page decision, Judge Thelma Bunyi Medina of the Manila RTC Branch 32 found historical researcher Rolando Peñaredondo Stephen guilty of qualified theft for taking 1,859 documents valued at P800,000 from the Philippines and Asia Division (PAD) of the National Library. Stephen is at large, the court said.

Another case involving the loss of 400 Philippine Revolutionary Bibles when valued at P2,000 was dismissed after the prosecution failed to present the supposed buyer.

Stephen's friend and alleged accomplice, Maria Luisa Hensl, former PAD chief, was acquitted of a separate qualified theft case for lack of evidence. She was accused of stealing 31 items, including letters of national hero Jose Rizal.

The court said the prosecution failed to establish that there was "collusorial taking" of the documents from vaults in PAD's rare treasures section.

Stephen was caught in 1993 by the National Bureau of Investigation as he was about to sell 45 pieces of documents to an antique dealer on Malate Street, Manila. An anonymous caller tipped off then acting historical Library director Adelaida Bolos of the theft.

Bolos' appeal to the public to return the national treasures yielded more than 7,000 documents, including the manuscript of Andres Bonifacio's trial, the Declaration of Independence, the Pact of Biak-na-Bato and Leonor Rivera's letter to Rizal's parents dated Dec. 18, 1892.

In his ruling, the court said the testimony of Silvestra Padua, owner of the Manila International Coins and Stamps Center, that Stephen sold him the documents was made "in clear and unequivocal terms."

Padua's testimony was deemed corroborated by Bolos, who mentioned Stephen during his frequent visits to the PAD, prospecting how to seek the help of the NBI.

Padua said Stephen first offered to him in 1991 original documents during the Revolutionary period. After the antique dealer had established the documents' authenticity, he bought the materials for P150,000, and sold these to collectors for P800,000.

When he learned that the documents were taken from the National Library, Padua spent over a million pesos to buy the items back, returning over 700 documents.

In his defense, Stephen said he was merely a victim of Bolos' revenge. He claimed he was being groomed as National Library director, being a protege of then NEB director Serafin Quiason. He said Padua was likely asked by Bolos to testify against him.

Stephen later suggested that Bolos and Quiason had a "relationship" but the court said the accused failed to explain how the alleged affair could have made Bolos fabricate charges against him.

Trader nabbed for assaulting policeman in QC

By Marlon Ramos

A 27-YEAR-OLD BUSINESSman was arrested after he was caught allegedly beating up a policeman who tried to accost him over a traffic violation on a busy road in Quezon City Wednesday afternoon.

Charges of physical injuries and direct assault have been filed against Benedict Chan of Greenhills, San Juan after he reportedly mauled SPO1 Benedicto Bhoni, 32.

Supt. Norberto Bahagay, chief of the Quezon City Traffic Enforcement Unit, said it was the second time Chan was arrested for allegedly attacking a police officer. The suspect briefly served time in prison for beating a policeman during a street brawl, he added.

Bhoni was directing traffic at the corner of Quezon and Scout Tuazon at around 4:30 p.m. when he flagged down Chan for driving without a license plate.

Instead of showing driver, the suspect allegedly assaulted the policeman and sped away. Motorcycle-riding bystanders gave chase. The suspect allegedly hit Bhoni's eyewitness, causing him to lose his balance.

Chan then reportedly slipped from his car and punched Bhoni on the face. The suspect eventually yielded to responding police officers.

P200M rehab of QC park planned

By Beverly T. Mendrial

THE QUEZON CITY GOVERNMENT plans to make the Quezon Memorial Circle (QMC) the city's central park and one of Metro Manila's most beautiful parks.

A P200-million rehabilitation of the park will be undertaken when it is returned to the management of the local government in July. A P40-million pedestrian underpass linking the City Hall and the QMC has already been commenced as part of the rehab efforts.

"The circle itself is going through a new development phase that shall evolve its image as the central park of the metropolis and as the most important shrine in the city" said Mayor Feliciano Belmonte.

The mayor has ordered an inventory of the assets and liabilities of QMC in preparation for the formal handover of the park management to the city government on July 1.

Belmonte said in a statement yesterday that a QMC inventory committee would assess the soundness of the park's operations.

The committee will also assess concerns raised into by the Quezon City Parks Development Foundation Inc. (QCPDF) through a memorandum of agreement among the Department of Tourism, National Parks Development Committee, National Historical Institute and officials of the city mayor.

The QCPDF, which has been headed by a non-profit by Chairman Phinma, a former vice mayor, was tasked to develop and maintain the Circle. Phinma and Justice Emilio Gonzaya of the QCPDF will assist the committee involved in necessary work.

HEALTH CARD
Mandaluyong Mayor Abalos Sen Pedro (left) shows a replica of the Kiss sa Pangkabuhayan health card entitling city residents to a P25,000 medical subsidy. With him is Dr. Lucido Ruiz, Capturing Mandaluyong Head.

Boycott of Manila Ocean Park urged

By Tina S. Santos and Margaux C. Ortiz

THE ANIMAL RIGHTS GROUP People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta) is calling for a boycott of the Manila Ocean Park.

Saying marine parks promote a distorted view of wildlife, Peta members, including one dressed like a giant fish and holding signs that read "Save Our Schools: Boycott Aquariums," slipped past park security officers and officials around noon yesterday to stage the protest.

"We're urging the public to boycott all marine parks because we object to keeping sea animals in captivity" said Peta Asia Pacific campaigns manager Rochelle Sequeda. "The only thing marine parks teach people is that it is acceptable to keep animals in captivity-bored, restricted, lonely and far from their natural homes."

"The Manila Ocean Park has taken 300 species of fish from their natural homes and placed them in tanks, inside a hotel, a restaurant, and various other attractions, denying the fish their freedom and everything that is natural and important to them," Peta director Jason Baker said in a statement.

Regardless and people should ask themselves what could be "gained from watching marine animals suffer in endless circles in concrete tanks full of chlorinated water."

The P1 billion Manila Ocean Park, behind the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park, is a project of the Philippine Tourism Authority with Singaporean and Malaysian investors.

Peta claimed at least 300 species of fish were removed from their natural habitats.

Another Peta campaigner, Ashley Peace, said, "Life in a tank is literally a death sentence."

MEMBERS of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals Asia lead a protest outside the Manila Ocean Park yesterday. ARNOLDO MATA

She said marine parks can never replicate the animals' natural habitat.

Cristina Bonnadales, DENR vice president for corporate affairs, said the park aimed to promote the conservation and preservation of marine species. She said they had been working closely with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Philippines) and government agencies like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Education.

Bonnadales said they were aware of their responsibility to the public and the environment.

Such officials say interactions and standards are being followed in the care and handling of the sea creatures.

This Series, marketing manager, said issued the dock can added proper handling ensured that the fish were in good health.

But Baker said scientific studies found that fish were intelligent animals that experienced stress and pain. "Just as other animals do."

He said places like the Manila Ocean Park took a physical toll on the captive fish.

Baker cited reports from officials of the Tokyo Sea Life Park aquarium showing that some bluefin and yellowfin tuna developed deformed faces "because of the stress of swimming in a small tank."

Limp fungus appeared on some fish's backs while others' fish's eyes became partially dislodged, said Baker, quoting the Tokyo marine park report's.

"Aquariums make claims of education and conservation, but they rarely succeed on either count," Baker said, adding that marine parks presented a distorted view of wildlife.

"Marine parks also contribute to the destruction of valuable ecosystems," he said.

Santos said the ocean park's conservation department is manned by trained and educated marine biologists and aquarists who educated people administration and species of jacksonii in the fish tanks.

"It was testament to the Manila Ocean Park's successful operation it evolves in the many natural births that have recently occurred within the environment," Santos said.

Since the marine park opened, two infants fly dusky sharks, four clownfish, four lionfish, four stingrays in Oz Pupi Tank, and several seaweed hatchlings in the Balinen Tanks.

"The environment has also maintained its empirical research on the development of a technology for coral propagation that will rehabilitate reefs in operation with professor Benjamin Vallejo of the University of the Philippines," Santos said.

MetroBriefs

Messenger robbed, shot dead

A MESSENGER was shot dead by six armed men who took from him P130,000 he had just withdrawn from a Metrobank branch in Makati City yesterday morning. One of the unidentified robbers shot James Armando Dela Cuesta, a messenger of Budgeter Corporation, when the victim refused to turn over the money to them. The National Capital Region Police Office announced the relief of precinct commander Chief Insp. Angelito Simonbal, whose area of responsibility includes Kamagong Street where the robbery was killed. Simonbal will also be subjected to an internal police investigation. Dela Cuesta and the money was in the vehicle the police's one strike policy against bank robberies in Metro Manila making police commanders accountable for such incidents. Jobi M. Arnaldo

Man held for shabu in buy-bust operation

POLICE held a Chinese national after a bag containing four kilograms of suspected shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) worth P48 million was recovered from him during a buy-bust operation in Quezon City on Wednesday afternoon. Peter Chan Ho, 25, was arrested by a composite team of anti-narcotics operatives along Mindanao Avenue, Barangay Pag-asa around 3:15 p.m. Interviewed from his room four plastic bags of shabu and a Mitsubishi Pajero which he allegedly used in his illicit activities. Senior Supt. Benjamin Magalong, chief of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency's Metro Manila Regional Office, said the suspect belongs to one of the newly organized Chinese drug syndicates in the country. He said the suspect has been supposed to be of high quality and that it could have entered the country through one of the many known "transit points" of illegal drugs. Marlon Ramos

Valenzuela mayor files lawsuit vs hotel

VALENZUELA CITY Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian has filed a lawsuit against Discovery Shores hotel in the resort island of Boracay saying the luxury hotel's building encroaches on a portion of the city's property. He filed the case on Thursday, December 2007. Gatchalian is seeking P5.2 million in rental damages in a case filed in the city's Regional Trial Court. The lawsuit identified as respondents Ruben Tio, Discovery Shores president; Annabelle Whittemore, president of D&M management company-Discovery Leisure Group and Jose Ferrero, General Manager of Discovery Shores Boracay. The mayor claimed the hotel staff refused to move them out of the hotel. Gatchalian said he decided to file the case after repeated attempts to talk to them were said to be to no avail. The management of the hotel declined to comment on the mayor's move. Nancy Carvajal

Summer sale, art party at LRI Plaza

THE LRI Design Plaza at 210 Nueva Ecija St., formerly Regency St. Lim St. Makati City is holding a summer sale and art party until June 7. Special discounts of up to 50 percent on selected items are available for designer lamps, shapeshifters, collectibles, and buyers of all kinds, from businessmen, home decor, antiques, footwear and fashion accessories, among others. The sale coincides with a street festival scheduled for Diego Rayman, an artists' organization, that ends on Sunday. The festival, dubbed "Piging Demog sa Regina," has been adopted by the Makati City government as part of the celebrations for the 2008 Araw ng Makati. It features a street bazaar, food carnival, launch of various design titles, an exhibition of the artist Regina, screening of French films and other related art activities. The festival is a joint effort of the National Commission on Culture and Arts, the Makati City Government, Liberty Stiles, Lopezin. This event in Design Plaza Inc.

MSD launches
"Everything I can"
Campaign

In celebration of the Cervical Cancer Prevention Month this May pharmaceutical company Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) launches the "Everything I can" cervical cancer prevention advocacy campaign which focuses on how Filipino women, including young people can protect themselves against cervical cancer. MSD is working with the Department of Health (DOH) and non-government organizations, including medical societies to reach out to mothers and young women and provide information about cervical cancer prevention.

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer affecting women worldwide. It is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in women. Annual global estimates around the year 2000 are 470,000 new cases and 233,000 deaths from cervical cancer. Eighty percent of these cases seem to develop in countries.

In the Philippines, according to the 2005 Philippine Cancer Facts and Estimates by the Philippine Cancer Society Inc. (PCSI), cervical cancer was the second leading cause of cancer death in women in 2004. In 2005, 7,277 new cases and 3,897 deaths due to cervical cancer were estimated to have occurred. This meant that there were approximately 10 Filipino women dying each day due to cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer is a serious condition that can be life-threatening. It begins when a woman becomes infected with certain types of Human Papillomavirus (HPV). If the immune system does not clear the infection, normal cells can begin to grow abnormally and turn into pre-cancerous lesions. If not discovered early and treated, this abnormal cell growth can become cancer. Most often, this can take a number of years, although in rare cases it can happen within a year. Women who have been infected with certain types of HPV and have not been able to clear the virus can get cervical cancer and pre-cancers.

Cervical cancer is highly preventable. You can talk to an ob-gynecologist or your daughter's pediatrician about screening tests and ask about available vaccines that can help protect against cervical cancer, genital warts, and other HPV-related cancers and diseases.

Do everything you can to protect you and your loved ones from the virus that causes cervical cancer. Log on to www.everythingwecan.com.ph for additional information.

MSD

5 cops in chef's case to be transferred

By Allison M. Lopez

THE FIVE MANILA POLICEMEN who allegedly extorted money from a Makati hotel chef will be transferred to Mendiola.

Supt. Elmer Matias, chief of the NPD General Assignment Section, said the policemen, who are facing charges of robbery-extortion, grave threats and physical injuries, would be assigned to the demonstration league in Mendiola Manilenses (MAMDI) and Provincial Regional Office 4-A in Zambonga City.

The charges stemmed from a complaint of Ghassian Kalaw who said he was arrested on fake drug charges and fed shabu so he would test positive for drugs.

Senior Insp. Rolando Gleodines, Insp. Nelson Lagasca, SPO4 Proctor Zamid, PO2 Ariel Cortez and PO2 Rolando Lapena, all of the District Mobile Patrol Unit (DMPU), were initially turned to the District Mobile Force.

Kalaw said in his affidavit that he was harassed by the policemen on April 4 in front of a condominium on Taft Avenue corner Vito Cruz in Manila after they claimed they found shabu paraphernalia in his car.

The victim resisted and was alleged ly smuggled and forced to eat shabu by the cops, reliable of detained P200,000 for his release. Kalaw was on bail after reportedly giving P20,000.

The chief's ordered cans to fight through an e-mail titled "beware of a group of Manila cops." The e-mail apparently reached the desk of Philippine National Police chief director Avelino Razon Jr., who immediately ordered an investigation of the incident.

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- Delighted beautiful finds in your way to work?

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Inquirer

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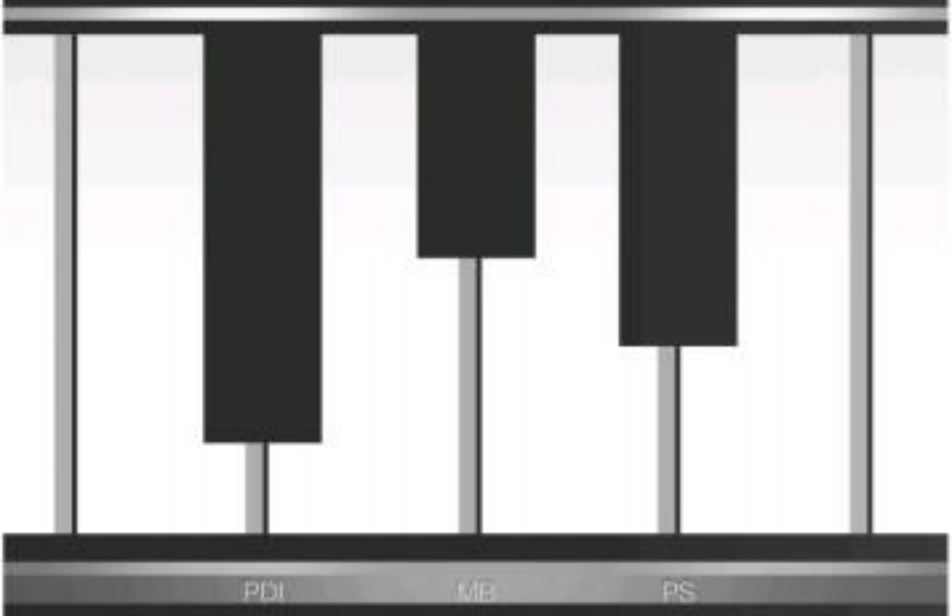
A Grand Performance



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SOURCE: Synovate Nationwide Urban Media Atlas Survey, January to December 2007

Government Warning: Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

The WORLD

Edna Lorenne B. Cerezo

Defense chief asks Olmert to quit

OLMERT

JERUSALEM—PRIME MINISTER EHUD OLMERT's troubles increased Wednesday when Israel's defense minister, Ehud Barak, called on him to step down from his post pending the outcome of a high-profile corruption investigation.

But Olmert, who has not been charged, seemed determined to stay put. Late Wednesday, according to the Israeli news media, he said, "There are those who believe that the launching of my investigation demands a resignation, but I don't adhere to this notion and I will not step down."

An official close to Olmert said, "The prime minister is convicted that as this investigation continues, it will become absolutely clear he did nothing wrong." The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter in public.

Olmert has promised to resign if charged.

Barak, a former prime minister, was the first senior member of Israel's coalition government to demand that Olmert give up his office over the corruption case.

"The prime minister cannot disconnect himself from the daily running of the government," Barak said at a lunchtime news conference broadcast live from the parliament building. Given the difficult strategic challenges facing Israel, Barak said, he did not think Olmert could "simultaneously run the government and deal with his personal affairs."

Barak convened the news conference to explain his party's position a day after a Long Island, NY, businessman at the center of the corruption investigation testified in court here that he gave about $150,000, mostly in cash stuffed into envelopes, to Olmert over the course of 15 years. He said the money was for campaign fund-raising and personal expenses.

The businessman, Morris Talansky, has denied that he ever expected anything in return, and he said his generosity reflected "extreme, extreme admiration" for Olmert, who he said he believed could bank divisions between religious and secular Jews.

Olmert has described the money as legitimate contributions for election campaigns and has denied ever taking a bribe. AFP

EVACUATIONS after being welcomed on June 4, 2001.

Nepal's monarchy abolished; republic declared

KATHMANDU—POLITICAL LEADERS in Nepal on Wednesday voted overwhelmingly to abolish the Himalayan nation's 240-year-old Hindu monarchy and declare a republic.

In an historic vote that caps a peace deal between Maoist rebels and mainstream parties, a new constitutional assembly ordered sixty-year-old King Gyanendra to quit his palace within 15 days so it can be turned into a museum.

"The sacrifice of thousands of Nepalese has been honored today by an getting rid of the monarchy," Maoist spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara said.

The abolition is a triumph for the ultra-leftists and marks a fresh start for one of the world's poorest countries, still reeling from a civil war that left at least 13,000 people dead.

"The Nepalese people have been freed from centuries of feudal exploitation, and the doors have now opened for a radical social and economic transformation," Mahara said.

Nepal's fiercely-republican Maoists, who fought for 10 years to remove the monarchy and create a secular republic, won the largest single bloc of seats in the assembly in elections last month.

A senior member of the 601-member Constituent Assembly, Kul Bahadur Gurung, said only four lawmakers opposed the move.

The republican declaration states that Nepal will become "an inseparable, indivisible, sovereign, secular and an inclusive democratic republic."

"All the privileges enjoyed by the king and royal family will automatically cease to an end," it says, noting that May 29 will henceforth be celebrated as "Republic Day."

Gyanendra, who ascended the throne after a drunken prince killed most of the royal family in 2001, was given 15 days to pack up and vacate his Kathmandu palace.

"This symbolic act the government to make the necessary arrangements to vacate the Narayanhiti Royal palace," Gurung told the near-eight gathering, prompting huge cheers and applause.

"The meeting also directs the government to take necessary actions to turn the palace into a national museum."

Outside the venue, perspectives about 1,000 people—who had been waiting impatiently for the vote—cheered validity as the decision was announced, an AFP reporter at the scene said.

"I am overjoyed. This is the most important day of my life," said Rajesh Subedi, a 21-year-old student and Maoist supporter.

The former rebels have told Gyanendra and his son and heir, Crown Prince Paras—loathed for his repressed playboy lifestyle—to bow out gracefully and adapt to life as a "ceremonial citizen" or else face "strong punishment."

Nepal's prime minister, Ram Chandra Poudel, told reporters the monarch "should understand and leave the palace by himself, that would be the best thing."

Gyanendra, seen by loyalists as the reincarnation of a Hindu god, was exiled to the throne after the 2001 massacre of his popular brother Birendra and most of the royal family by a drink-and-drug-fueled crown prince who later killed himself. AFP

FILE photo of a cluster bomb unit left unexploded in the southern village of Oncesti, Lebanon.

111 countries agree on landmark treaty to outlaw cluster bombs

DUBLIN—DELEGATES FROM 111 nations agreed Wednesday on a landmark treaty to ban cluster bombs, Ireland's foreign minister said, in a deal that lacks the backing of major producers and stockpilers of the lethal weapons.

After 10 days of painstaking negotiations at Croke Park stadium in Dublin, diplomats agreed the wording of a wide-ranging pact to outlaw their use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions by its signatories.

It also provides for the welfare of victims and the clearing of areas contaminated by unexploded cluster bombs.

The agreement will be formally adopted on Friday, and signed in Oslo on December 2-3. Signatories would then need to ratify it.

"This is a very strong and ambitious text which nevertheless was able to win consensus among all delegations," said Irish Foreign Minister Micheal Martin. "It is a text committed to international humanitarian law."

But crucially, the United States, Russia, China, India, Israel and Pakistan—all major producers and stockpilers of cluster bombs—were absent from the Dublin talks, and thus not part of the agreement.

The Irish Department for Foreign Affairs said 111 participating states and 18 observer countries attended.

The process "has been characterized by a true determination on all sides to reach an ambitious and consensual outcome," the ministry said.

The treaty requires the destruction of stockpiled munitions within eight years—though it leaves the door open for a longer, more precise generation of cluster munitions that pose less humanitarian risk.

Britain was widely cited by campaigners as being at the forefront of a group of states working to water down the treaty.

But in a dramatic move Wednesday, Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced in London that Britain would withdraw all its cluster bombs from service in a bid to "banish the big bad" in the Dublin talks.

Simon Jane said in a statement he was "delighted" with the treaty's agreement, and said it made "the world a safer place."

The draft treaty agreed in Dublin read: "Each state party undertakes never under any circumstances to: "(a) Use cluster munitions; (b) Develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer to anyone, directly or indirectly, cluster munitions; (c) Assist, encourage or induce anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a state party under this convention."

Much of the wrangling in Croke Park focused on what signatories could and could not do in joint operations with states still using cluster bombs.

The draft text said signatories "may engage in military cooperation and operations."

But the Cluster Munition Coalition, an umbrella group of nongovernmental organizations, hopes that the treaty will stigmatize the use of cluster munitions—as the similar Ottawa Treaty did for land mines—and stop countries from helping others to use them. AFP

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SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy S. Molondres Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ordoñez

ENRICO Villanueva will be one of the vital cogs for the Purefoods Giants today

PBA FIESTA

Aces, Giants battle today

EXCEPT FOR COCA-COLA, TEAMS IN THE UP-per bracket of the standings are slowly losing their respective spots at the top.

And teams on the shoo—like Alaska and Purefoods—seem ready to exploit the situation.

On a victory roll, the Aces shoot for a fourth straight win against the T3 Chairs, who are back on their feet with two consecutive victories, in the Smart-PBA Fiesta Conference tonight at the Tiuno Center in Sampaloc City.

"It's nice to see the little progress that we are making after a forfeit start," said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio after the Giants recently rallied their first back-to-back wins of the conference at the expense of the Sta. Lucia Realtors.

Holding a 3-3 record, the Giants are seeking a third win to a row at 7:30 p.m. against the 5-1 Aces that will push them closer to the top.

Meanwhile, Coca-Cola, which got a free ride to the top after co-leaders Red Bull and Talk N' Text Boosters-ed lately, tries to pull away when the Tigers meet the Boosters, the Bulls and Tigers in the twin-ender at 4:30 p.m.

Red Bull, which shared the lead with Talk N' Text early in the week, absorbed a third straight defeat from Alaska while the Phone Pals lost their last two outings after grabbing a piece of top spot.

STANDINGS	W	L
Coca-Cola	7	1
Red Bull	7	3
Talk N' Text	7	3
Alaska	6	3
Sta. Lucia	6	5
Purefoods	5	5
Air21	5	5
Alaska	3	5
Magnolia	3	6
Ginebra	3	6
Barangay Ginebra	3	6
Phone Pals	3	7
Tiuno	2	8

GAME TODAY
(Tiuno Center)
7:30 p.m.—Alaska vs. Purefoods
GAME TOMORROW
(Araneta Coliseum)
4:30 p.m.—Magnolia vs. Talk N' Text

"The leading teams are slowly losing their grip of the top spot. It's encouraging to note that we are within reach to contend for the top spot," said Gregorio. "But at this point, my only concern is how we maintain our composure every game."

The Aces are also showing signs of revival after impressive victories over powerhouse squads capped by a 120-98 rout of the Phone Pals last week.

LA Tenorio and Larry Fonacier, whom the Aces acquired prior to the start of the conference, are beginning to get into the flow of things for their new team, in the process rolling over some of the load off reigning MVP Willie Miller and sporting up the lanes for import Randy Holcomb and Sonny Thoss.

"We're just trying to build momentum here in the second round," said Alaska coach Tim Cone. "Everybody is playing well so we are. We'll have to match them defensively."

It will be a battle of teams with two imports on each side in the Coca-Cola Tiburones duel.

Jason Dixon and Donald Copeland will banner the Tigers while Marquis Cummins and Corey Santon hope to pull Tiburones (5-5) out of the ollas.

WHAT'S INSIDE
Serena, Ana hurdle French Open Rivals /A37
Celtics near NBA finals /A38

Beat the Summer Heat
L.A. CAR ACCESSORIES

69 days to the 29th Summer Olympics
Beijing 2008

Get unrelenting power in your drive.
Go for new XCS Complete Combustion System with 95 OCTANE
XCS
COMPLETE COMBUSTION SYSTEM

THE BATANG Pier of Harbour Centre jubilate after winning a Mo PBL crown at Batangas City Sports Center Wednesday

Batang Pier rebuilding for 6th title

By Jasmine W. Payo

WITH FIVE STRAIGHT CHAMPIONSHIPS, THERE'S NO OTHER good ahead but another title...

That's the forbidding task now facing Harbour Centre after the Batang Pier bagged an unprecedented fifth straight Philippine Basketball League (PBL) crown in just seven conferences.

"It's going to be hard," said Batang Pier coach Jorge Gallent. "We have to rework again. We have to make sure that we maintain our level of competitiveness."

The Batang Pier outclassed Sharp Toothpaste for the second straight conference, this time winning three straight games capped by an 86-75 nod to wrap up the best-of-five title series, 3-1, last Wednesday.

Aside from surpassing the record four straight titles runs set by Sta. Catalina from 1998 to 1988, the Batang Pier also moved up to third in the league's all-time championship list behind Sta. Catalina's seven crowns and Welcoat's six.

For team owner Mike Romero, even if the jubilance around town is becoming familiar, the thrill of triumph has yet to wane.

"It feels the same, we never get tired of it," he said.

But Romero, who will take over as league chair next season, admitted all the high expectations can get stressful.

"There was more pressure to win this conference," he said. "We have several members of the RP Team, so if we don't win, we're like a failure. But if we win, it's just expected."

Jason Castro, though, made sure the Batang Pier will live up to their lofty billing.

Although listed as one of the league's shortest players at 5-foot-9, Castro consistently delivered big numbers to finish the tilt with Most Valuable Player award on top of a record five consecutive Mythical Team citation and a Finals MVP plum.

The 23-year-old Castro ended his amateur stint in phenomenal fashion by averaging 17.5 points, 4.4 rebounds, 4.3 assists and 2.3 steals in the Finals.

And Castro hopes to live up to higher expectations when he suits up as the first Filipino import in Australia's National Basketball League.

"It will be a big adjustment, the players are bigger," said Castro, who will leave for Sydney on July 1. "But I don't want to think about the pressure. I'll just keep my focus on the game."

Aside from Castro, the Batang Pier may likely lose several key players in the next PBA rookie draft including FE duo Solomon Mercado, TY Tang, Sean Ibeta, Jonathan Fernandez and Finals MVP Jeff Chan. Some of their free agents like Chad Alonzo, Al Vergara and Boyet Bautista also deserve a second look.

Gallent said La Salle stalwart Rico Maierhofer and Ateneo standout Chris Tiu are among those being eyed to lead the squad next season.

"We're rebuilding again," said Gallent, who has steered the Batang Pier since their first title run in 2005.

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Valencia badminton tilt today

SLOTS IN THE Provincial training pool awaits the winners of the Valencia Sports Center-Town Fiesta badminton regional championships which will be held today until Sunday.

National head coach Fred Chan yesterday said close to 500 participants are seeing action in the event which is considered the natural age-group championships as it will feature champions from the previous leg of the regionals.

"We are confidently looking for new talents and this is the best way to do that because in this tournament, we will see those who have excelled in their respective provinces," said Chan.

The event, which coincides with Valencia's anniversary, will have competition for 16-years and below as well as open division where RP shuttlers like Wilbert Ong, Therese Chan, Stella Chan, Alfredo Muller will see action.

"This year's anniversary tournament will feature the age group category which serves as the foundation of the talents and cause of the Team Sweden Regional Championships," added Chan.

The regionals kicked off this year at Valencia where Anthony Reyes

Young Unso seizes Nat'l Open limelight

By Cedrill P. Tupas

LONG jumper Rochelle Corpuz of Centro won the gold during the National Open at the Rizal Memorial track oval. CHRIS ZAMORA

THE WELL-DESERVED LIMELIGHT seemed as much rounders for Jose Renato Unso.

The 17-year-old son of former Philippine track star Renato Unso eclipsed the 31-year-old national junior record in the 110-meter hurdles yesterday to win the limelight at the start of the Milo National Open track and field championship at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

Unso, an incoming sports management freshman at De La Salle University, was the star of a bristling TMS (Sun Agencies) juggernaut that ran the world's fastest Terry Capistrano figure of the first 15 golds at stake in the three-day meet sanctioned by the International Amateur Athletics Federation.

After pocketing four golds in the Palarong Pambansa in Puerto Princesa City, Unso wasted no time in burnishing his credentials with a sweep of the high school boys' hurdles events. Unso took a one-second break before plunging back into training last week.

The play worked for Unso, who clocked 15.20 seconds to shatter the old mark of 15.36 set by Alonzo Jardin in the 1994 Manila Palaro Games.

"I didn't expect the record because I took a break and thought I couldn't recover my form in time," said Unso, who clocked 15.7 seconds when he ended the same event in the Palaro.

Also striking gold for TMS were Mercedes Manipol (women's 3000m, 11 minutes, 24.7 seconds), Lordlle Dacuyan (women's long jump, 5.49 meters), Princess Que (women's high jump, 3.00m) and the 4x100m squad of Arnold Villamiche, Oliver Unso, Jesus Arjay and Theodore Strauss that clocked in at 42.92 seconds.

Rizal's Lee Jeong Geon became the first foreign athlete to dismiss gold when he ruled the men's hammer throw as the expense of Southeast Asian Games record holder Arnel Fresnoza of the Philippine Air Force, who was nursing a sensitive groin on his cheek.

Lee flung the hammer to 61.37m to win convincingly over the 27-year-old Fresnoza (55.71m) and the PAF team-mate Jerry Fresnoza (45.67m).

Fresnoza, an Almond Silver Class, whose personal best of 60.98 was established when he topped the SEA Games last year, remained unperturbed even in defeat, saying he remains on track in his preparations for a major international drawing meet in Indochina Cavaliers.

Medalist Edward Hernandez of the Philippine Air Force earned the distinction as the meet's first gold winner when he reigned supreme in the 3000 in 14 minutes, 43.16. His teammate, Julius Hermosa, settled for the silver in 14:48.09.

UAAP power house De Lasalle University and Ateneo collected two gold apiece with Jamarone Christopher Ulboc topping the boys' 1600m in 15:40.9 and teammate Nerlyn Rubio winning in the women's pole vault with a 2.80m effort.

Ateneo stands through cuts: 110m hurdles champion Mike Morales and Jam Salenson, who ruled the girls' pole vault with a 2.40m record.

In other events, Hanna Usha Ito of University of Baguio won the women's discus throw (34.40m), Jona Aguilar of Occidental Mindoro topped the girls' 3000m (11:17.31) and Jocelyn Capistrano of Antique prevailed in the girls' discus throw (34.65m).

Cemera Lee Rochelle Cooper bagged the girls' long jump gold with a 5.49m effort to foil Hong Kong's Loh Mei Lee, who settled for the silver with a 5.37m performance. Cedrill P. Tupas, Contributor

Villar: Sports can restore Pinoys' pride

SENATE PRESIDENT MANNY VILLAR believes that sports provides an opportunity for the Philippines to restore its pride as a nation and, eventually, move forward.

VILLAR

"The only way by which the pride and dignity of Filipinos are restored is through sports," he said, citing the achievements of World Boxing Council super featherweight champion Manny Pacquiao.

Speaking at the opening of the Milo National Open Track and Field Championship yesterday at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum, Villar said he is also supporting moves to increase the allowances for sports.

"We should throw support both moral and financial," the Senate President said. "We may not be spending a lot on sports but its returns go beyond. It's whatever is the whole country."

Admitting that he is a president who likes to see winning sports programs, Villar said he is willing to sit down with sports leaders in the country "so that we will know what needs to be done."

Villar said he is also supporting the move for the "Magna Carta" for athletes, a move espoused by Sen. Miguel "Migz" Zubiri, which among other things would provide for the welfare of national athletes and the development of sports in the country.

Also present at the opening were Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr., PSC commissioner Ed Hernandez, PSC executive director Fr. Wenny Uy and Philippine Track and Field Association chief Go Teng Kok. Cedrill P. Tupas

RACING POST
BY TOP CHOICE

RP chess wizards zoom ahead of Burmese rivals

DAGUPAN CITY — THE PHILIPPINES LOOMED to assert its mastery of Myanmar in the chess duel on Thursday.

Fastest move by International Master candidate Rolando Seña and Indian national junior champion Oliver Barbosa, the Filipinos notched similar 3.5-2.5 triumphs in the sixth and seventh rounds of the 80-Olympiad Dual Match at the Lake Gardens Hotel here.

Seña, who was playing for the first time in so many rounds for the Filipinos, who counted ahead of the Burmese with a total of 27 points, 12 ahead of their rivals with only five rounds to go in the novel 12-round tournament.

Seña drew with IM Oo Kyaw Thu in 27 moves of the Sicilian Dragon in the sixth round before trouncing Fide Master Kyaw Soe Kyaw in 33 moves of the Grunfeld in the seventh round to emerge as the event's leading scorer with 6.0 points on the wins and two draws.

"My moves are okay, so I go for the win each time," said Seña, eighth placer overall in the recent Subic Open and 220th in the Philippine Open leaderboard after nine rounds.

The 22-year-old Barbosa rebounded from a fifth-round setback by thrashing IM Aung Thet Naing (Unrated), 61 moves) and Oo Kyaw Oolan, 64), respectively, in the tournament being hosted by the Dagupan Chess Federation through Mayor Marahen "Bambol" Talentino.

Recovering from a skimp, Reggie Dley recorded the Filipinos' other victory in the sixth round when he trounced IM Kyaw Lin Naing in 65 moves of the Modern Opening.

It was Dley's first win after starting with three straight losses and two draws in the event organized by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines headed by Prospero "Butit" Pichay.

Subic Open champion Grandmaster elect Jayson Gonzales settled for back-to-back draws against IM Kyaw Soe Kyaw (Slav, 13) and IM Kyaw Lin Naing (27 moves, Nimo-Kenidi) in the sixth and seventh rounds.

Three brothers also drew his matches against IM Zaw Htun Wynn (King's Indian, 41) and Aung Aung Linn (Benko-opening, 32).

Ed candidate Rolando Andador saw his four-game win run broken after yielding to GM Wei Yao Tour in 79 moves of the Sicilian defense and IM Zaw Htun Wynn in 59 moves of the Glo defense in succession. Ray Lustro

New billiards idols clash for Cebu tourney berths

ISI OCAMPO

THE TOP 16 PLAYERS FROM the inaugural season of the Search for the New Billiards Idol begin today in a special tournament for the four slots to the main draw of the Pool Idol Presidents' Money Villar Cup Cebu Leg slated June 20 to 22 at the Avenue of Hill City Cebu in Cebu City.

Those cue artists accumulated the most number of points in the seven-legged the first major grassroots development project of the Hillcrib Managers and Players Association of the Philippines in cooperation with Buggy Promotions of businessman Perry Mariano. Pinoy Sports of Atienza "Pinoy" Payne and Segovia Billiards Stable of Jonathan Sy.

The special tournament will be held at the AMF-Payot Billiards Center in New Farmers Plaza in Cubao, Quezon City.

Leading the field are Jonna de Ocampo and Wilfredo Millares, who both won a leg and remain solidly listed well in other stages. The two 26-year-old viking stars have garnered a total of 220 (8M PSP ranking points to share top spot in the Billiards Idol overall ladder.

Other leading qualifiers are Porfilio Santos (215 points), first leg winner Mark Hinolan (215), leg no. 4 champion Benjie Guevarra (210), Leg no. 6 titlist Ilpo Sorondon (185), Manolo Tanzano (160) and Leg No. 5 winner Reuben Pelaez (175).

Filipino golfers drop to 5th in Sirikit Cup

CHIHIRO IKEDA WRIGGLY POINTED her rhythm and marched par-74 but Cyna Rodriguez and Louise Manalo struggled through the rain-hit second round as the Philippines fell to fifth place in the Queen 18000 Cup at the Sodegaura Country Club in Chiba, Japan, yesterday.

Both, who finished with a 76 in the first round and didn't sweat in the three-to-play, two-to-count format, birdied the par-4 15th to salvage a 37-over 37 total.

But Manalo, who shot a three-under 71 in the first round, skied to a 79.

while Rodriguez, who improved a lot with a four-under 70 Wednesday, limped home with a 76 marred by a triple bogey 7 on No. 16.

The RP squad ended up in a tie with Indonesia with a 293 aggregate, 23 shots behind new leader Japan.

The Japanese took charge with a 9-under 139 for the day dislodging erstwhile pacesetter Korea with a whopping 26-under 270 for a one-stroke lead heading into the final round of the 16-hole championship featuring players from 14 nations.

The Koreans settled for a 141 after a sizzling opening round of 128 and dropped to second with a 271 total while Taiwan squandered a 143 for third at 282, 12 shots off the pace.

Australia pooled a 144 to move up to fourth at 298.

Asako Fujimoto finished in the nine and fired the day's best of 67 while Mika Miyazato had a 72 for Japan's 138 scepter. Rikako Morita, who shot a 64 in the first round, didn't come with a 75.

Korea drew a 70 and 71 from Sun Ju Ahn-Son and Yong Soon-Jin, respectively, for a 141 as it bounced for a final round duel with the hosts both in the team and individual competitions.

IKEDA

Becierra falls short, settles for 2nd place

SANTE BECIERRA STRUGGLED ON THE greens in the early going then ran out of holes in a last ditch rally to Singapore's Rob Broughton stamped with a 2&1 win in the final of the Malaysian Amateur Open Wednesday at the Kelab Golf Negara Subang in Malaysia.

Becierra, who pulled off a pair of 1-up victories to earn a coveted date versus Broughton, racked up points to the first 18 holes and fell by as many as seven early in the second half of their marathon 36-hole duel.

But the JCSTC bet fought back with three straight birdies from the 12th in the afternoon to move to within two holes before his rival marched into shoe for shoe to clinch the win.

Both players bogeyed No. 16 and halved the 17th hole, leaving Koh with the victory with a two-hole edge going to the final hole.

"My putting was very poor today. I missed six puts from inside four feet," said Becierra, who opened his bid to the match play with 68s and 70s rouds. "I tried to fight on but in the end it was too much."

As Becierra struggled on the grabbing surface, Koh, 20, raced to a 4-up lead after 10 holes and took the first three holes in the after noon session to post a 7-up lead.

"It was awesome today. I led all the way against such a tough opponent and I'm happy to win," said Koh. "In the afternoon session, I pressed brilliantly and composure and patient even when Becierra tried to make a comeback."

In the consolation match, Alex Tsong of Malaysia overcame Australia's Paul Mowe, 1-up, to clinch third place.

Aunzo tows 32 match play bets

FERDINAND MUNOZ: Top qualifier after 36 holes

By Manong B. Castillo

BACOLOD — THE BIG NAMES IN THE FIELD RALLIED LIKE CRAZY YESTERDAY and gained three eighthal places on the final 32 seats down of the 2008 Philippine Amateur Golf Championship, with grinded intermediate Emilio Aunzo recording top scoring at the Manapla turn.

Defending champion Anthony Fernando checked in with a 73 and took the 27th spot over in Emilio Aunzo signed two of the biggest turnarounds by returning a 69 after an 81 on Wednesday to be the 36th seed in the match play phase that starts at 8:45 a.m. today.

The cut was pegged at 330, with a seven-over playoff for the last six slots being held until later the afternoon with previous runner Mac 67/56 Soto, Jason Carlos, Joey Huerva and Sonny Villaber not among them.

Glen Borgo also failed to advance after ballooning to an 82 with a 74.

Aunzo flabbered out a 33-35 card and won via a scoreback over Jessie Bautista, the National Golfers' Open producer, who carded his 68 on Wednesday but limped home with a backside 39 yesterday for his 73.

As top qualifiers, they earned the two lightest assignments in the first 18 holes of match play today, with Aunzo, who won two titles in Malaysia before coming over slugging it out with Del Monte's Louie Lamoste, and Bautista battling local bay Jun-Jun Bermudez, the 32nd and 33rd seeds, respectively.

Texter John Rier Abalos bagged the his 3 shot with a 143 total after a 70 to deny Del Monte's Sonny Abano, while Mario Galvez, the losing finalist last year, was fourth also at 143 but with a second day 75.

Labuan, who lost to Fernando last year, 6 and 7, takes on dangerous Dave Hernandez, who fired a 76 and made it tight on the cut line with Erwin Wisman, who qualified on the No. 3 seed after a 71 for 145, taking on Jose Mario Simbingco.

Aurelio Gimpay, a veteran at La Salle who learned the game in this course, still bagged the No. 8 slot after a 75 also for 145, 9&4-dogfight out with 48 Mel Borgo.

The biggest jumps of the day were turned in by Aunzo, the former junior ace who finished with a 149 this Archbishop Fernando, his first round for.

Zamite Boy Galero, the 18-year-old who is also in the NCO program, shot a brod 79 after opening up with an 81 to be in 25 or place and in a collision with rival bro Chope Ordaz, who ballooned to a 76 and took 12th spot from joint third at the start of the day.

More than qualifying for the top 32, an interesting subplot developed as players scrambled to make the top 16, which will be invited into the Philippine pool tryouts starting next week.

Of the two prominent groups, the NCO showed off of its sown fare into the match play, four into the system, while ICTM will be represented by five players in the final 32 and four in the last 16.

JB Tampinco, who played just five rounds in the last 16 months while working in the United States, made it as the No. 11 seed and into the 32nds after a second straight 76 gave him a 146. He clashes with Anthony Salinas, the 22nd seed who had a 79 for 151.

Two rounds will be played today with the Final 16 action to start at 1:30 in the afternoon over an Oakley Guerdoville and Bally Viray battle over 18 holes in the morning for the first ever senior crown.

Defending ladies champion Anya Tampinco raised the classification in her division with a 73 for 145, with Irene Galvan of Cebu clocking in second at 230 after a second straight 75. Sarah Medin also takes a first round bye.

Lady Falcons seek crown

FAVORIC HOMER 'INSTALLINGLEY' CLOSE to their first Shakey's Visayas crown, swimmers coach Boley Derze thinks it's time to unleash Lady Falcons skipper.

Coming off a pair of bikkersaid finishes in two major tournaments this year, the Lady Falcons hope to finally get over the hump today when they go for a sweep of the best-of-three series for the 9 League crown against the runner Lady Eagles at The Arena in San Juan.

"Our losses in the two finals this year made our team stronger," Derze said in the aftermath of his team's 64-57 victory over Lady Eagles in Game 1 of the series.

The Lady Falcons, spearheaded by guest player Nevina Bautista's 20 points and Hana Lagrosa' 12, outchased the Lady Eagles, 25-7, 20-14, 23-15, 29-22, before a huge crowd for a 1-0 series lead Sunday night.

The win kept Adamson's record against Ateneo spotless in four meetings this conference, giving them the confidence that the season can wrap up the series with a game to spare.

"We're very determined to finish the series tomorrow (today)," Derze, whose team was also undefeated against the Eaglets in the UAAP eliminations, before losing to the Lady Spikers in the finals.

Adamson has all the tools to overpower Ateneo once again, especially with Bautista, 22, one of the three runners in the Most Valuable Player race, getting into a rhythm that is capable of keeping the Lady Eagles on the backfoot.

Floor defense was also a crucial factor in Adamson's Game 1 victory and Ateneo coach Michele Laborte said the Lady Eagles will also put its extra effort on the defensive end.

Cardolf F. Espina, Contributor

Ramirez brothers strut stuff in Touring Car kickoff races

SUBIC BAY—BROTHERS LOUIE and Ronkie Ramirez of Petron-SBA emerged triumphant in the rumble kickoff leg of the 2008 Philippine Touring Car Championship recently at the Subic International Raceway.

Defending champion Jody Gooncng of Sta. Mig Coffee and Yuta Funeo, latch here from the United States for a variation, were tagged as favorites as they rightly battled the lead during the early laps of the race organized by Autoscoots Association of the Philippines.

But the two bumped each other on the eighth lap, paving the way for Ronkie Ramirez to seize the lead on the ninth lap. The contact left Bultar with a heavily damaged front as he took the pit on the 11 th lap while Gooncng called it quits on the race lap after ending with a busted tie rod and a detached rear fender.

Ronkie appeared headed for the win when suddenly at the last turn of the last lap, his fuel hose ruptured jess 100 meters away from the finish line.

Louis Bautista then easily breezed by to claim the checkered flag in Round 1, while celebrity driver Gaby de la Merced grabbed runner-up honors.

Round 2 was as equally exciting. Gooncng could not run with his busted car, as Funeo set the pace during the first six laps with BSADE/Mazda Motors bet Dennis Uy on his tail.

But both Dennis and Uy suffered engine problems that forced them out of the race, allowing Ronkie to grab the lead like he did.

LOUIS Ramirez (left) holds his trophy after topping the kickoff of the 2008 Philippine Touring Car Championship. Ronkie Ramirez placed third.

Bumgarner makes huge US strides

ADAM KARTING QUEEN MICHELE Bumgarner is making big strides in her formula racing training in the United States under the field of aerofil, renowned John Wilkie Racing Jr. the One-Mazda Series.

Her coach, Gordon Ross, has set specific goals for Bumgarner to achieve each race, focusing on proper progression to provide her with a good solid base to build upon each time she steps in the track.

BUMGARNER

The 18-year old Bumgarner had actually raced twice in the San Manda Series with the support of Nissan, Sportscars GSO Asia, the Department of Tourism, Sports and Wellness, Oakley Molecule, Solar Sports, Gladiator and Goodyear.

The first win at Sebring Florida in March where she was hit by an errant driver on the first lap that damaged her suspension and forced her to retire early.

The second one at the Millers Motorsports in Salt Lake City Utah proved Bumgarner's great potentials as she overplowed her first full race. Bumgarner also surpassed her time in each of the six times she took to the track. She finished 20th in a field of 31 in the main event.

Bumgarner and her female engineer Kim Grabach also attracted the attention of the public and the media during the race.

CYCLING WINNERS: Top performers in the recent Tandem Cycling Race and Fun Run with QC Councilor Ariel Inton (third from left). They are champion Clarisse Dello, second placer Joyce del Rosario and third placer Jessa Dello.

So leads Palawan Open entries

THE COUNTRY'S TOP PLAYERS, led by Grandmaster Wesley So, have been invited to compete in the 2008 Palawan Open chess championship slated June 4-7 at the Capitol Hall in Puerto Princesa City.

Also extended invitations were GMs Rogelio Barcenilla Jr., Eugene Torre and Buenaventura "Bong" Villamayor and newly crowned 50 Subic Open champion GM-elect Jayson Gonzales.

The event is organized by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines headed by Prospero "Butch" Pichay and hosted by the Palawan Provincial Government through Gov. Joel T. Reyes and NCFP vice president for Luzon and provincial administrator lawyer Ramon Bernabe.

"Everything is ready," said Secretan. "We are hoping no more unwanted to worsen the success of the tournament."

As stake in the tournament are trophies and cash prizes with the champion pocketing the lion's share of P50,000. The runner-up and third placer will receive P30,000 and P20,000, respectively.

For inquiries, call Regie Bretchdan at 0927-811-8051.

Serena, Ana hurdle French Open rivals

RAFAEL Nadal hits a return to Thomaz Bellucci during their French Open first round match at Roland Garros on May 28. Nadal won, 7-5 6-3 6-1. AP

PARIS—WITH THE LIGHT FADING ON CENter court and Serena Williams facing the possibility of heading into a third set at the French Open, the eight-time Grand Slam champion started to get a little peeved.

She quickly took care of that problem.

"I didn't want to go there with me today," said Williams, who won the last four games to beat Mathilde Johansson of France, 6-2, 7-5, Wednesday in the second round at Roland Garros.

"You tired of playing so late and in the dark, and I was like, 'OK, I'm going to close it out before there.'"

Joining Williams in the third round on Day 4 of the French Open was second-seeded Ana Ivanovic, who beat Lucie Safarova, 6-3, 6-2.

On Thursday, Williams' older sister, Venus, was scheduled to play in the second round, as were No. 1 Maria Sharapova and No. 3 Jelena Jankovic.

On the men's side, top-seeded Roger Federer and three-time defending champion Rafael Nadal were scheduled to play.

The younger Williams, the only past women's champion competing at Roland Garros, has made it to the third round at 32 of the 34 major championships she's entered during her career. The only time she didn't was a second-round loss at the 1998 Australian Open in her Grand Slam debut.

Since then, she has won eight major titles and gotten 10 years older. For a while now, she has found herself facing players who want to make a name for themselves by beating her.

"Especially if they've younger than they want to win," Williams said. "Everyone seems to want to beat me."

Johansson is only three years younger than the 26-year-old Williams, but she was playing in just her sixth Grand Slam tournament.

"Of course, I was nervous," said the Frenchwoman, who reached the second round at Roland Garros for the third straight year. "But I was not petrified."

Sharapova struggled with her serve in the wind in her first-round match on center court, hitting 17 double-faults and barely managing to defeat 101st-ranked Evgeniya Rodina 6-1, 2-6, 8-6.

The top-ranked Russian, trying to complete a career Grand Slam at the thirty-second major, leveled out by 64 percent of her first serves.

"I was very close to losing this match," Sharapova said. "Not many things were working for me today after the first set."

The 19-year-old Rodina came within two points of winning at 5-4 in the third set, but Sharapova won the next two with strong serves to hold. At 6-6, Sharapova regained control by breaking serve for the first time in the final set, returning a second serve with a big forehand that caught Rodina flat-footed.

Then, serving for the match, Sharapova double-faulted one final time, but took the next three points to end it.

"I had problems in every department of my game today so I'll have to improve on every aspects of those things," Sharapova said.

Nadal improved to 22-0 for his career at Roland Garros by defeating Thomaz Bellucci 7-5, 6-3, 6-1 in a rain-interrupted match.

After rain suspended play Tuesday with the score at 1-1, Nadal was broken twice in the first set Wednesday, including while serving for the set at 5-3 before eventually winning.

Nadal is trying to become the first man since Bjorn Borg in 1978-81 to win the clay-court Grand Slam tournament four years in a row. He next appeared in another qualifier, Nicolas Devilder of France.

Third-seeded Novak Djokovic moved into the third round by beating Miguel Angel Lopez Jaen of Spain 6-3, 6-1, 6-3.

"It's always good to have an easy match," the Australian Open champion said. AP

SERENA Williams on target. AP

Phelps unlikely to win 7 golds, says Biondi

BEIJING—DEBS DO NOT DOUBT American swimmer Michael Phelps winning seven or more gold medals in the Beijing Olympics and matching or eclipsing Mark Spitz's record, said Matt Biondi, the last swimmer to accomplish it.

Spitz removed seven events at the 1972 Munich Games, winning gold and breaking the world record in all seven of them.

It is not that Phelps is not up to the task or is less competitive, said Biondi, who partially matched Spitz by winning seven medals—though only five of those were golds—in the 1988 Seoul Games.

"The gold keeps getting more difficult as the field of competitors around the world improves," Biondi said on Wednesday in a telephone interview from his home in Hawaii.

"I hope he does it," Biondi said of Phelps' target of winning eight gold medals.

"It's not to say it wouldn't be doable, but he's going to face specialists in each event ... plus-and-the-woodlands, he's got seven total swims from Spitz and I did. The odds are less than you'd like them to be." The 22-year-old Phelps is expected to compete in eight events at the U.S. Olympic trials starting next month in Omaha, Nebraska, and speculation has already begun over whether the Spitz gold-medal record from Munich might finally fall.

"I think the challenge is certainly a daunting one," said Biondi, now 42.

"When it comes and even more so for Phelps now—compared with Spitz, the consistent swimming well at the Olympics are much more diverse. Spitz's biggest challenge was at the 100m, where other competitors on the U.S. team," Biondi, though, said he had great respect for Phelps as a swimmer as well as a diplomat for the sport.

"He's developing into a true professional. I like the way Jack of all trades and master of none," that Phelps is the exception to that. He can master all the events," Biondi said.

"He also has poise, and he's mastered internationally with his speaking ability on TV and in public, he's become a positive role model," said Biondi, a veteran of three Games with 11 medals overall.

He said Phelps would have to contend with extra pressures on top of those of just focusing well in the pool.

"Everywhere Phelps goes, he's going to be pounded," Biondi said. Reuters

PHELPS: Record holder

SPORTSWATCH

5th Tö'rs Cup set at Veterans today

THE 5TH TÖ'RS "SWING FOR A CAUSE" golf tournament kicks off today at the Veterans Golf Club with the Tö'rs Cares Tö' Foundation, Inc. headed by lawyer-Marichil J. Rebol II as host.

Proceeds of the tournament that will use the System 36 format will be used to purchase filtered water-drinking fountain for water-deficient areas in the Eastern Visayas school in Cabalagan. Tee-off time is from 10 a.m. to noon. Awarding and relief prizes will be held at Heaven Restobar at the Clubhouse. Tournament sponsors are PCSO, Globe Telecoms, Hobby Club of Marbella West, DPSB GEN and Manila Harbour Center.

Pasay 3-cocker starts

THE PASAY CITY COCKPIT (PCI) HOLDS the 8th Special 3-cock derby starting at 8 p.m. today with some 65 fights lined up.

Hadi Pasang Negro-slated 4 guaranteed prize of P200,000 for an entry fee of P5,000.

Among those invited were leading derby-ree from La Loma Cockpit, Elorde, Las Pinas Coliseum, San Juan Coliseum, Makati Coliseum and Cavite Coliseum.

Meanwhile, the 54th Pasay Fiesta Wire One-Cock Main swings into action on Sunday, June 4.

Due to the big number of entries (at least 300), the event will start at 7 a.m.

Salpukan lures 112 bets

MAPUA COLLEGE'S SALPUKAN 3-COCK derby, a five-day cockfight series designed for medium-scale cockers, has attracted 112 entries after two days of competition.

Two more qualifying rounds will be staged on June 5 and 6 while the grand finale rages on June 7.

The new format (seventy-fee on elimination round and minimum bet of only P1,000) has caught the attention of Metro Manila and provincial cockers, according to promoters Eric Orduna and Porty Salud of MTU Sports and Amusement Corp.

The 81-cocked cockal prize is P1.2M.

BATANG PBA: Hugo Ayoma of Batang TNT-Quezon City drives against Batang Magnolia-Makati defenders in their game at the Ynares Sports Complex in Antipolo City recently. Batang Makati won, 93-84, in the event for kids 9-12 years old and supported by Burlington.

PSC policy draws positive response from NSAs, bets

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE SPORTS Commission received positive responses after presenting its proposed classification, allowance and billeting schemes to the national sports associations and national athletes yesterday.

PSC chief Butch Ramirez said the agency will implement starting this June 1 its new policy doing away with the classification of athletes which has been in place for more than a decade in favor of an across-the-board allowance scheme for all athletes in the national team.

Ramirez, who met with NSA heads at the PSC Diamond room in the morning before talking to athletes at the Rizal Ballroom Hall in the afternoon, said all athletes will now get P13,000 monthly allowance inclusive of a meal budget.

But the new policy applies only to athletes who have won a medal during the past two Southeast Asian Games or non-medalists but promising youngsters who will be endorsed by their respective NSAs.

The non-medalists who will still make the cut-off will be given P6,000 monthly inclusive of meal allowance.

In effect, those who didn't meet the criteria will either be cut or will fall under the junior category which will have a four-year Olympic cycle to prove themselves. They are not eligible for cash allowances but will get uniforms and foreign exposures.

"The NSAs found these easy to swallow," said Ramirez.

Under the new classification, the head coaches will get P20,000 monthly, the assistant coaches P13,000, and trainers/junior coaches P10,000.

The allowances given to athletes and coaches, said the PSC chief, will be tax-free.

The PSC will also start transferring the athletes to their 15-ha the Philsports Arena in new quarters that will be built in the area owned by Bone International School, according to commissioner Joey Mendiola.

Those eligible to stay in Philsports are contenders of Metro Manila and Baguio City for the third straight year.

"But I was not petrified."

Sharapova struggled with her serve in the wind in her first-round match on center court, hitting 17 double-faults and barely managing to defeat 101st-ranked Evgeniya Rodina 6-1, 2-6, 8-6.

The top-ranked Russian, trying to complete a career Grand Slam at the thirty-second major, leveled out by 64 percent of her first serves.

"I was very close to losing this match," Sharapova said. "Not many things were working for me today after the first set."

The 19-year-old Rodina came within two points of winning at 5-4 in the third set, but Sharapova won the next two with strong serves to hold. At 6-6, Sharapova regained control by breaking serve for the first time in the final set, returning a second serve with a big forehand that caught Rodina flat-footed.

Then, serving for the match, Sharapova double-faulted one final time, but took the next three points to end it.

"I had problems in every department of my game today so I'll have to improve on every aspects of those things," Sharapova said.

Nadal improved to 22-0 for his career at Roland Garros by defeating Thomaz Bellucci 7-5, 6-3, 6-1 in a rain-interrupted match.

After rain suspended play Tuesday with the score at 1-1, Nadal was broken twice in the first set Wednesday, including while serving for the set at 5-3 before eventually winning.

Nadal is trying to become the first man since Bjorn Borg in 1978-81 to win the clay-court Grand Slam tournament four years in a row. He next appeared in another qualifier, Nicolas Devilder of France.

Third-seeded Novak Djokovic moved into the third round by beating Miguel Angel Lopez Jaen of Spain 6-3, 6-1, 6-3.

"It's always good to have an easy match," the Australian Open champion said. AP

NIKE LEAGUE

San Beda posts 5th straight victory

SAN BEDA WENT THROUGH THE formality of routing an undersized opponent for its fifth straight victory in the Nike Summer League basketball tournament Thursday at the San Juan Gymnasium.

Baru Garandilla scored 17 points and two other Lions had 13 each as San Beda outclassed La Salle-Lipa, 105-53.

The La Salle-Lipa game was an unrelated former collegiate MVP Sam Ilusorio played only 10 minutes while Ateneo legendary Eydie Gorriceta was not fielded.

Already in the quarterfinals, San Beda faces Lyceum tomorrow for the right to take the top seed in Group B.

Lyceum also won its first five games.

Although both teams have perfect records, San Beda, the NCAA champion, is heavily favored to beat Lyceum.

The winners salute on University of the East while the loser meets Far Eastern University in the quarterfinals.

La Salle and Ateneo are the two other top seeds waiting for a quarterfinal foe.

ABS-CBN Sports Scrapbook weekly highlights of the Nike Summer League on Studio 23 and will cover the five games starting on June 5 when the tournament moves up to the quarterfinals.

Schedules, results and news are available on www.nike.com.ph.

ACE GROUP TENNIS: Organizers and participants of the Phiba Center Cup age-group tennis championships pose at the Subic Bay International Tennis Center. Held in honor of Olongapo City Mayor Rey Gordon, the event is supported by T-Bones, Dunlop Sports, SBMA and the Olongapo City Government.

Celtics near NBA finals

KEVIN Garnett reacts after a play against the Detroit Pistons during Game Five of the Eastern Conference finals on May 28. AFP

BOSTON—RAY ALLEN FOUND HIS shooting touch just in time to put the Boston Celtics within one win of the NBA finals for the first time since the original Big Three.

Allen scored 20, hitting a long 3-pointer after Detroit center Rasheed Wallace had a curious left, then he and Kevin Garnett each made a pair of free throws down the stretch as the Celtics beat the Detroit Pistons 116-102 on Wednesday night to take a 3-1 lead in the Eastern Conference finals.

Garnett scored 20—his most in the playoffs this year—finished with 14 rebounds and Paul Pierce added 18 points and 10 rebounds, and Rajon Rondo added seven points, 13 assists and six rebounds for Boston.

"We know the significance of this game," said Garnett. "You don't win this game, you put basically yourself in a corner. They're experienced, and they've been in a lot of pressure situations. Now it's up to us to go up there and try to get one."

Game 6 is Friday in Detroit, and with a victory there or on Sunday back in Boston, the Celtics would advance to the NBA finals for the first time since Larry Bird, Kevin McHale and Robert Parish took them there in 1987.

Chauncey Billups scored 26 and Richard Hamilton had 25 points for Detroit, which has reached the conference finals for consecutive years but advanced further last season and went one win in the East.

The 20 points was also a playoff high for Allen, the usually reliable scorer who had been cold for most of the playoffs.

"My feeling right now is no different than if I scored 30 points and I was seen the game. It's a great feeling," Allen said. "Just winning gives me the greatest joy regardless of what I've done."

Billups twice drove to the basket in the final 30 seconds, hoping for a foul that would throw the offensive-rebound-challenged Celtics an inconsequential 3-point or to the buzzer.

Boston led by as many as 17 in the third quarter, but Hamilton scored 12 points during a 21-8 Detroit run that made it 92-88 with 4:46 left.

Boston led 100-96 before Rodney Stuckey hit a 3-pointer with 1:22 left. But, after a timeout with 0 seconds left on the shot clock, Allen took the inbounds pass and put up a jumper to give Boston a 3-point lead.

Billups raised an calf but more layup that missed, but in the fight for the rebound the Celtics tipped it out of bounds. Billups drove again, pausing it hamstringy off the front of the rim.

The Celtics ran down the 20-second clock before Garnett was forced to take an off-balance jumper. Rondo fouled Stuckey, and he hit both free throws to make it 102-101 with 9.2 seconds left.

Allen rounded down then Rondo again swapped for Stuckey but that time the rookie missed the first, giving the Boston Garden crowd a moment to swoon.

Garnett hit a pair of free throws to clinch it. AP

Lakers prepare for Spurs stand

KOBE Bryant

LOS ANGELES—POISED TO reach the NBA finals for the first time since 2004, the Los Angeles Lakers were taking nothing for granted as they prepare for Thursday's Game Five against the San Antonio Spurs.

Although the Lakers have won all seven playoff games at home this season and are riding a wave of momentum after their 93-91 road victory on Tuesday, they expect a stiff challenge from the wounded NBA champions.

"They certainly can't rely on home court," Lakers coach Phil Jackson told reporters after his team grabbed a commanding 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals. "They will have to go out and play a ball game.

"It is very important that we come out there (in Los Angeles) and play a similar type of game, with the kind of energy that we had, the kind of board and rebounding and ball possession. That will win the ball game for us." Inspired by MVP Kobe Bryant who scored 26 points and had 10 rebounds, the top-seeded Lakers handed the Spurs their first home loss of the playoffs to tie Saturday's on Tuesday.

The Spurs were led in Game Four but would have snatched a last-gasp victory had Devin Barry made a three-pointer at the buzzer. Barry claimed he was fouled by Derek Fisher less than a second.

"I was nervous, man I was nervous," Bryant said of the final play of the game with 2.1 seconds left on the clock. "I just kind of watched the flight of the ball. Once it hit the side of the backboard, I was extremely relieved."

Overall, though, Bryant was delighted with his team's end-to-end performance and much more experienced opponents.

"It is a big step for us," said the All-Star guard, who helped the Lakers win three consecutive titles from 2000-02.

For San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich, Sunday's defeat was a bitter pill to swallow for a team who have clinched four NBA titles. "Tough loss," he said. "I thought we fought back all night long." Reuters

Fifa lifts Iraq ban

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA—SOCCER's governing body Fifa lifted the international ban on Iraq, allowing Sunday's World Cup qualifier against Australia to go ahead.

Fifa had suspended Iraq on Tuesday over what it said was government interference in the domestic running of the sport by dissolving the national Olympic committee and all sports federations.

The ban was provisionally lifted just hours before a Wednesday midnight, Sydney local time, deadline after Fifa said it received documentation from Iraqi officials which explained the situation.

Fifa received a letter from the General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Iraq, confirming that the IOA had been "excluded from the above-mentioned decree, thereby re-establishing the statutory order of the Iraqi association and its leaders, who will "continue their activities in safe and outside Iraq until legal election," Fifa said.

However, Fifa said that team meetings would be scheduled with Iraqi officials to "catch and due the ban could be re-imposed if certain criteria were not met.

A delegation comprising members of the Asian Football Confederation, Iraqi Football Association, the Iraq government and Fifa will meet to clarify all outstanding issues.

BUSINESS
Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

Gov't to spend P93.6B more this year

Supplemental budget to fund pro-poor programs

By Michelle V. Remo

THE ARROYO ADMINISTRATION has decided to spend P93.6 billion more than the approved national budget of P1.126 trillion this year to fund more pro-poor programs, the Department of Finance announced yesterday.

The programs include P72 billion worth of cash transfers for the poor, P1 billion worth of scholarships and interest-free educational loans, and P1 billion worth of energy-saving programs for the transport sector.

Cash transfers mean money (literally) given to poor families, specifically those who will send their children to public schools. Energy-saving programs, meanwhile, may include leasing to operators of public utility vehicles so they can afford changing engines to one that requires the cheaper liquefied petroleum gas as fuel.

"Government economic managers will have to move to decide what sub...

GOV'T B1

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- **Unilab's P1.52-B drug** project gets perks /B10

Peso falls to 7-month low of 43.925 to $1

By Doris C. Dantao

THE PESO YESTERDAY PLUNGED TO A seven-month low of 43.925 against the dollar as concerns that high oil prices would further dampen the country's economic growth this year.

The local currency opened at the day's peak of 43.75 and closed at its little-changed against the greenback. Currency dealers said the peso would have depreciated further if not for the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' dumping of dollars to support the local currency.

The peso lost 20.5 centavos against the greenback from Wednesday's finish of 43.72 after the government announced that domestic growth in the first quarter fell below market expectations at 5.2 percent over a year ago. (See story on Page 1.)

After rising by nearly 19 percent to become Asia's best performing currency last year, the peso has reversed its momentum and has now depreciated by about 6 percent against the dollar this year.

Volume traded at the spot foreign exchange market Philippine Dealing System amounted to $617 million from the previous day's $788.5 million.

But the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas believes that the peso-dollar exchange rate would remain "broadly stable" this year given the country's comfortable level of for...

PESO B4

Stocks close 1.1% lower

...lower yesterday after data showed economic growth slackened in the first quarter, worse than many economists had expected, dealers said.

Gross domestic product for the quarter grew at 5.2 percent from a year earlier, hit by the slowdown in the United States which ...

The composite index fell 21.85 points, or 0.86%, to 2,512.32, its lowest closing level since May 2 when it finished at 2,779.42.

The all-share index was down 14.68 points at 1,731.18.

There were 78 decliners and 78 advancers, while 59 were steady.

The government revised down its initial growth estimate for the previous quarter from 7.4 percent to 5.4 percent.

"The number tells us that the economy is suffering from the current global slowdown led by the US," said Simon Wong, economist at Standard Chartered Bank in Hong Kong.

"With this, we can say the Philippine economy growing at just 4 percent for the full year as experts will further contract. The slowdown in the US is only the beginning of a bigger slowdown," said Wong.

Virtual boardroom presence

WITH FUEL PRICES GOING off the roof, not to mention strict airport security measures, many business executives have become averse to travel unless really necessary.

After all, with modern technology it's now possible for branches of companies to touch base or communicate face-to-face with their colleagues in any part of the globe.

Until the Electronic Commerce Act (Republic Act 8792) took effect some years back, directors of a corporation were required to be present wherever their boards convened for official business.

The idea was, their physical attendance was necessary to enable the company to avail itself of their expertise in the discussions and resolution of important corporate matters.

In a concession to advances in telecommunications, the Securities and Exchange Commission has relaxed the rules on attendance to allow "virtual" presence, rather than actual appearance, in board meetings.

Through teleconferencing or videoconferencing (or meetings held using the electronic medium

Rizel C. Maldeniego

The responsibility of complying with these requirements, and maintaining the integrity of the minutes of board meetings, rests with the corporate secretary.

He starters, he has to install at the meeting place a tape recorder or electronic device that can clearly record the proceedings.

With sufficient time allowance, the secretary should notify the directors of the time, date and agenda of the meeting, and make a hard copy to mail out (also split among) in person and who will avail themselves of tele-/videoconferencing.

If some documents are to be taken up in the meeting, they have to be numbered and marked so all the directors, physically or electronically present, can follow and participate in the discussion. With different courier service or high definition facsimile machines easily available, sending those documents early enough to the directors or they can read them ahead of time would not be a problem.

Identification

Any director who opts for tele/videoconferencing has to give notice of that intended action at least five days before the scheduled meeting so the secretary can make the appropriate arrangements.

At the start of the meeting, the secretary should do a roll call and request the directors to state their name and location.

Those attending through "virtual" presence have to confirm that they can completely and clearly hear the others, and those at the other end of the line can similarly hear them clearly.

During the meeting, directors who want to speak must identify themselves beforehand and, depending on the medium used, be able to clearly hear and/or see each other.

In case a speaker fails to identify himself, the secretary has to make a quick identification of that person either by making the identification himself or directly inquiring from the speaker.

The strict identification process is aimed at ensuring that all the statements made or questions raised during the discussion are attributed to the right persons.

For the same reason, in the event a statement of a director participating in the meeting by way of tele/videoconferencing is garbled or interrupted, the secretary is obliged to ask that it be repeated or reiterated.

Aside that two feasible, the secretary has to ensure what he heard or understood to have been said by the director concerned for confirmation or correction purposes.

Voting process

Although getting a consensus, rather than actual voting, is the preferred manner to resolve boardroom issues, a "division of the house" sometimes cannot be avoided when some matters have varied nuances from the directors.

If that happens, the voting process has to be supervised by the secretary. He should individually call out the names of the directors and, with the director identifying himself, record the votes cast.

Although the proceedings of the board are required to be recorded via a recording medium, the traditional way of keeping the minutes of corporate meetings is not dispensed with.

Depending on the company's practice, the minutes have to be reduced to writing and circulated to all the directors, regardless of the manner they participated in the meeting, for their signatures.

This way, the proper corrections or adjustments, if any, can be made in the minutes before they are filed for future reference.

The directors, especially those who attended by tele/videoconferencing, cannot later complain that their statements or votes were not properly recorded.

The "virtual presence" process for board meetings may be strict, but the economic and convenience it affords make it worth trying by companies with directors who have numerous geographical commitments.

For feedback, please write to corpdialogue@inquirer.com.ph.

NTC ordered to discuss 'free text' drive with telcos

By Rica T. Olchondra

DOCKING PUBLIC INTEREST THE DEPARTment of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) has ordered the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) to talk to mobile operators on how to ease the price of mobile communications—particularly text messaging.

"Since it is NTC's mandate to regulate the telecommunications industry, it has been tasked to lead efforts to lower communications costs for consumers. This is especially important for consumers now that the prices of commodities are increasing due to oil price hikes," DOTC spokesperson Thompson Lawrence said in a telephone interview.

Lawrence said Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza has ordered NTC Commissioner Ruel Canchan to report on his directive's progress starting this week.

Telecommunication companies were earlier taken aback by reports that lawmakers were looking into their branding to see if they were actually authorized to charge for text messaging.

In a statement, Smart Communications Inc. said that telcos were authorized to charge for text messaging and argued that rates in the Philippines were already among the lowest in the world.

Philippine mobile phone operators, including Smart, are offering their own unlimited text messaging packages in sachet packs as low as P25.

"These packages are not free, but these are—as we see it Filipinos' ideal responses to our rising [illegible]," said Smart spokesman Ramon R. Isberto.

IMF urges RP to focus on social spending

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY Fund has nothing against the Philippine government's decision to embrace a "small" budget deficit of 1% billion this year to shield the poor from the harsh impact of rising food and fuel prices, so long as the state does not resort on oil duty to boost tax collection.

IMF resident representative Ilhan Inaglr yesterday said the government would afford a small deficit—equivalent to one percent of gross domestic product (GDP) as recently announced by Finance Secretary Margarito Teves—because previous fiscal surpluses had already resulted in a slowdown in the public sector's debt burden.

"The price rises scope for fiscal policy to be used for managing to several shocks," Inagir said.

Where the public debt burden accounts for over 100 percent of GDP, as the situation was in the Philippines before 2005, it means that the output of the domestic economy is a given year is not sufficient to pay for those liabilities.

But while conceding a small deficit, Inagir stressed the importance of escalating investments in the tax effort.

"This would help assure the investor community that the increase in the deficit is temporary and that the government's medium-term fiscal consolidation program remains on track," Inagir said.

The IMF executive also pointed out that the additional spending to be lined up by the government this year would be most beneficial if used to protect the poor from rising fuel and food prices.

Based on the IMF's studies, well-designed cash transfer schemes and targeted education and health spending among the most effective ways to provide safety nets in response to food and fuel price shocks.

In a macroeconomic briefing conducted by briefing Bank officials on Wednesday, Inagir said it's important for the government to provide public goods such as infrastructure and social spending, in order to attract fresh investments.

"But as important as the quantity of spending is the quality of spending," Inagir said. "Quantity important is that the spending don't underwater...the roads that are built, the spending provided on education and hospitals—is well targeted."

To raise revenues sources of revenue, Inagir suggested three areas of focus—tax administration, streamlining of fiscal incentives and reform on excise taxes. He said these were already in the Finance department's pipeline.

"The argument today for raising the tax effort is not the same argument in 2000," Inagir said. "Back then, the key argument to raise tax effort was to avoid a fiscal crisis. Today it is really to be able to provide more infrastructure."

"It's possible not to raise the tax effort if we agree not to incur more debt, but that will mean lower level of infrastructure provision, lower level of health and education spending."

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Asian Fund - Peso	1.8146	1.8010
Managed Fund - Peso	1.7378	1.7318
Asian Fund - Dollar	1.8146	1.8010
Equity Fund - Peso	2.7331	2.7303
Bond Fund - US Dollar	1.4497	1.4497

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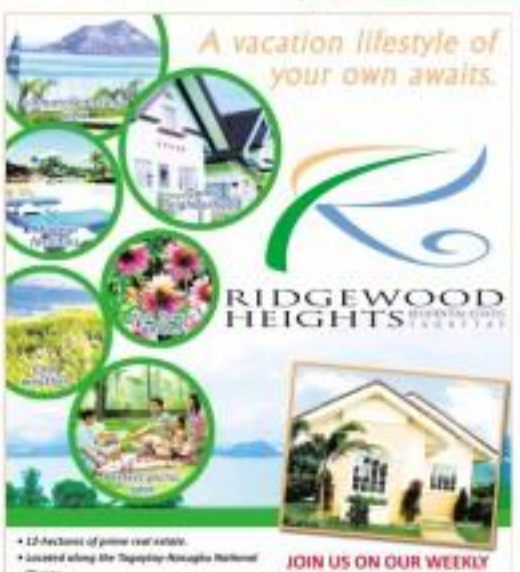

Philippine Real Estate Festival

Grandest real estate 'fiesta' to happen at the MOA

THIS IS ONE Philippine festival you wouldn't want to miss out. It's got personalities, celebrities, big number of participants, and a lot of floor space for more festival activities.

Dubbed as the grandest and biggest real estate event in the country, the Philippine Real Estate Festival, a gathering of the country's top real estate builders and developers, will be staged at the SMX Convention Center Mall of Asia Complex on July 24-26, 2008.

"We wanted to bring the Philippine Real Estate Festival to a bigger stage this time and there was no better choice than to host it in the biggest venue, which is the SMX Convention Center. This is indeed a very grand idea on our part to elevate a real estate exhibition to higher expectation," said Rene Rasa, over all-chairman of the Philippine Real Estate Festival, and National Director of the chamber of the Real Estate Builders Association (CREBA).

A strong advocate of housing for the masses, Rasa is also the vice president of the CREBA International Foundation Middle East and vice chairman of the CREBA Social Housing Foundation.

The three-day Philippine Real Estate Festival will be a grand showcase of the flagship projects, prime developments, housing products and services of the country's top and recognized real estate builders and developers and related industries.

According to Rasa, the Philippine Real Estate Festival will gather "some 100 of the country's top real estate developers, along with exhibitors from the allied trades and industries-making it one of the biggest real estate events of 2008."

The event also highlights the presence of personalities in the Real Estate industry as speakers in the programs and conferences.

Leading the guests list are Vice President Noli de Castro, Senate President Manny Villar, and Congressman Feliciano Belmonte.

The grand Philippine Real Estate Festival won't be complete without activities that will engage the visitors in worthwhile activities to make them better understand the housing or the real estate industry in general.

The public can attend the free seminars and lectures designed to help them know how to shop for a new house or condominium, avail housing loans from the government and private entities, compute real estate tax, and other related topics.

The seminars and lectures will be conducted by speakers who are experts in their respective fields and is open to the public free of charge.

As in a real festival, one highlight of the event will be the staging of the Miss Real Estate Philippines 2008, who will eventually compete in the first ever Miss Real Estate Asia.

Likewise, the 2nd GREAT Kitchens Asia Real Estate Who's Who Awards, first recognition the top personalities and achievers in the Real Estate sector, will also be launched in the Philippine Real Estate Festival.

Organizers of The Philippine Real Estate, have tied up with different organization, both local and foreign chambers of commerce, various associations, allied industries, allied organizations to ensure the participation from all sectors. The Festival will also honor various CPVE organizations. The Real Estate Brokers and practitioners industry the Filipino Inventor (of Real Estate, Realestate products)

Solons pledge support for rice scheme

LandBank joins legislators to fund food program

By Amy R. Remo

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES and the Land Bank of the Philippines have pledged to allot funds and extend technical support to farmers to increase the country's production of corn and palay.

Under a memorandum of agreement forged between the House, LandBank and the Department of Agriculture Wednesday night, each representative will set aside at least P5 million of his or her Priority Development Assistance Fund to support the government's decade-old self-sufficiency plan for 2009-2018.

"In charting their common goal to achieve food sufficiency, the House, DA and Land Bank have agreed to launch and implement the 'Rice and Corn Productivity Program' that would enable qualified beneficiaries to undertake palay and corn production projects in various congressional districts around the country," the agreement stated.

On top of providing funds for the program, the House members will also work on the prompt release of funds from LandBank.

LandBank, for its part, has committed to allocate counterpart funds equivalent to three times the amount to be put up by each representative.

According to the agreement, LandBank will take charge of assessing loan proposals using its standard evaluation procedures, and will disburse the funds in accordance with approved credit facilities, proposals, existing policies and procedures.

"It will also have to maintain a record of fund disbursements, and prepare and submit periodic reports on the status of the funds to the participating congressmen, as well as make a program status report to the DA and Congress," the agreement stated.

Meanwhile, the DA will extend farming technologies, technical aid and infrastructure support such as irrigation maintenance facilities for this credit program.

The agriculture department will also identify areas suitable for corn and palay cultivation in each congressional district.

Besides enticing the support of legislators behind its Palay Self-Sufficiency Program, the DA also got the backing of the country's governors for this program, which aims to make the Philippines 90 percent self-sufficient in rice by 2010.

PNOC-EDC shuts down Northern Negros plant

By Abigail L. Ho

INSUFFICIENT STEAM PRODUCTION prompted the Lopez-led PNOC Energy Development Corp. to temporarily shut down the 49-megawatt (MW) Northern Negros geothermal facility—a move that is expected to last for at least nine months.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, PNOC-EDC president and chief executive Noel Aquino said the geothermal production wells' latest steam production was no longer enough to generate the minimum operating load for the generator facility.

"The decline in steam production was assessed to be due to the clogging of the wells by calcite minerals found in the current geothermal field," he said. "The clogging prevents the wells from releasing the steam from its very source underneath the earth.

"Based on the advice of the equipment suppliers, it is no longer possible to reservoir the plant because continued operation will cause damage to the steam turbine generator."

He said that during the nine-month period that the plant would be shut down, the company would be looking into other steps to address the problem, chief of which would be a thorough cleanup of the production wells.

Even with the planned cleanup, however, Aquino said the 49-MW Palinpinon-I geothermal plant was only be able to produce steam good for 35 to 38 MW of power due to the small area of operation.

The Northern Negros geothermal facility had actually been operating under capacity since last year.

Mining sector expects $1.8-B boost this year

FIVE MAJOR MINING PROJECTS are expected to boost investments in the sector by a hefty 181.8 percent to $1.8 billion in 2008 from an estimated $892 million this year.

The projects are expected to go into production soon.

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Lito Atienza said the mining projects include the Philsaga gold project in Agusan del Sur; Crosscurrent Delphi Copper Corp.'s Delphi copper project in Nueva Vizcaya; Coral Bay's nickel exploration project in Rio Tuba, Palawan; Adlai Mining Monagh Carmen Copper Corp.'s Toledo copper project in Cebu; and Philsaga Resources Corp.'s Mindoro gold project.

Atienza further noted that the opening and start of production in these projects will likewise help increase the value of mineral production by 3 percent to $4.3 billion in 2008 from an estimated $3.6 billion this year.

All the projects are currently in the construction and development stage. For this year alone, the five mining projects are expected to infuse a total of $294.2 million in new investments.

In particular, Philsaga is expected to invest $2.2 million; Crosscurrent, $64 million; Coral Bay, $25 million; Carmen Copper, $90 million; and Philsaga, $58 million.

Also, Atienza revealed that he has been instructed by President Macapagal-Arroyo to "modernize (mine) revenue of any issues that are being encountered by these projects and encourage them to open earlier, preferably this year, to boost the country's export performance."

He explained that the mining industry is one of the critical sectors identified by the President that can restore the country's low export performance. In the first quarter of the year, Philippine export performance registered negative growth of 6.8 percent, he added. Amy R. Remo

Roundup

Let them buy coal

THE FOREIGN Chambers of the Philippines is urging the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. to handle the responsibility of coal procurement for the transmission of the National Power Corp.'s privatized plants and to independent power producers, instead of letting the state power firm do the buying.

"Continuation of the current practice adds unnecessarily to the cost of power and associated high systems losses and compromises efficiency," the group said in another to PSALM president Jose Ibazeta.

At present, Napocor is the one that handles for the supply of coal for plants such as the 600-megawatt Calaca (unit 3). The Calaca plant was sold to Team Tractebel SA. But since it has yet to be turned over to the new owner, Napocor is still the one procuring coal for it. **Abigail L. Ho**

Price of rice still high

A COALITION OF MARKET and nongovernment organizations yesterday urged Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap to investigate why prices of rice have remained high and unaffordable despite claims that the supply of the staple has stabilized.

Rice Watch and Action Network (RWAN) said prices of rice in the market as of May 27 range from P32 to P57 a kilo, data from the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics showed.

Before prices had rapidly increased, rice had cost P24 to P28 a kilo, as of Feb. 27.

"We are worried that the prices will not go back to the pre-crisis level but it should be (at) a lot to make the staple food become affordable to poor consumers and farmers," said Jessica Reyes-Cortes, RWAN convenor. **Amy R. Remo**

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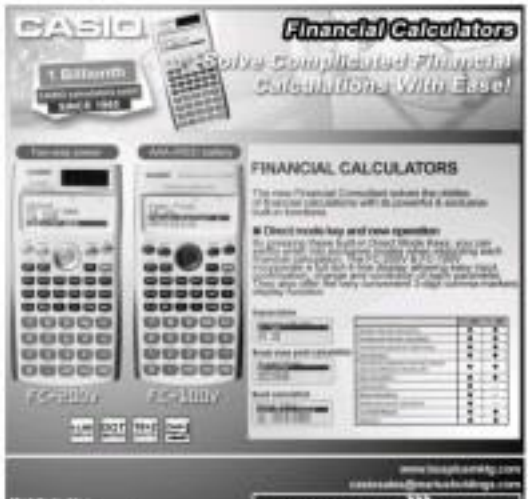

Peso falls to . . .

From page B1

eign reserves.

In an economic briefing for clients of Sterling Bank of Asia on Wednesday, BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo also said the central bank remains in global oil price watch mode.

As such, he said the BSP would be ready to take action "at any early evidence" that the market's expectations would be overshooted and that the projected by the inflation targeting central bank."

On the currency front, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said that the exchange rate was still within the 42-43.40 peso assumption in the Macroeconomic Development Budget Coordination Committee.

A broadly stable exchange rate, instead of a consistent ap-

Gov't to spend . . .

From page B1

or projects would be covered by the proposed additional spending, the DOF said.

Once all projects have been identified, the executive branch will go to Congress to seek its approval for the proposed P93.6-billion supplemental budget.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said P18.6 billion of the additional spending would be financed by revenues through the value-added tax on oil.

Teves explained that the government was expecting to collect P18.6 billion more in VAT on oil as a result of surging crude prices in the world market. Higher oil prices, should volume of oil imports remain constant, result in an increase in the collection of VAT.

The remaining P75 billion of the proposed additional spending of P93.6 billion would be financed by borrowings, Teves said.

"We must emphasize that the revenues from both tax and non-tax sources are critical to support increased levels of spending and maintain a high level of economic growth," Teves said in a statement.

Agreeing to resort to borrowings to help fund the additional spending requirements means that the government already gave up on its goal to post a balanced budget this year.

Economic managers agreed on Wednesday that the government would push at 2010 its goal of balancing the budget from the original schedule of 2008.

SMC plans Asean projects

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

FOOD AND BEVERAGE giant San Miguel Corp. is looking at possible investments in breweries and hard liquor production in Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, reasoned by the growth in beer and spirits in these countries.

San Miguel president Ramon Ang said on the sidelines of the stockholders' meeting of the company's biggest arm, Ginebra San Miguel Inc. (GSMI), that these countries continue at least 300,000 hectoliters of beer and other alcoholic beverages, thus presenting good opportunities for SMC.

"These markets are just opening. There are no transnationals (building facilities there and hard liquor) in these markets," Ang said.

He said tourism was spurring economic growth in these countries.

"Like in Angkor Wat (Cambodia), foreign tourist arrivals in 2007 hit almost 4 million compared with the Philippines' 3.7 million last year," Ang explained.

Ang disclosed that the company was already in talks with potential partners, but he declined to identify the companies.

GSMI, meanwhile, reported yesterday that its revenues grew 14 percent to P2.4 billion in the first quarter.

Domestic sales were partially swung by Gran Matador and GSM Blue, which more aggressive distribution initiatives and promotion activities helped push volumes for flagship brand Ginebra San Miguel.

DBP takes over Al-Amanah Bank

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE STATE-OWNED DEVELOPMENT Bank of the Philippines yesterday completed its acquisition of a 70-percent stake in the country's lone Islamic bank, Al-Amanah Islamic Investment Bank.

Investment Al-Amanah Bank CEO Jaime Pangandaman said in an interview that DBP had paid for the 350,000 shares held by the national government and the Presidential Management Office at the par value of P100 each.

"We offered the purchase. DBP is now the controlling stockholder of Al-Amanah," Pangandaman said.

The takeover deal, which valued the 70 percent interest in the capital-deficient bank at P98 million, raised DBP's stake in the Islamic bank to 80 percent.

Pangandaman said the deal was consummated after DBP deposited the payment for the government's stake with Land Bank of the Philippines yesterday.

He said the bank would make a tender offer to buy out at the same price the remaining shareholders of Al-Amanah Bank, particularly pension funds Social Security System and Government Service Insurance System which hold 50,000 shares each.

There are still some 2,300 shares in the bank held by individual Muslim investors to which the DBP would also extend the tender offer.

Pangandaman said the SSS and GSIS have already agreed to sell their shares.

Islamic banking is a type of banking that conforms to Islamic law, which prohibits the charging of interest. Instead, the bank provides funding like an equity investor that shares in the profits or losses of its enterprises. Financing is structured like lease-to-own arrangements, buy-sell plans, joint ventures and risk agreements, or partnerships.

DBP earlier announced plans to beef up Al-Amanah's capital to P1 billion, the minimum required for it to engage in universal or expanded banking operations.

The bank had projected it would need to spend about P1.5 billion to buy out other shareholders, wipe out the Islamic bank's negative net worth and put in additional capital.

DBP is bullish on the future of Shariah or Islamic banking, now emerging as a lucrative niche in the global banking arena given the rising wealth in oil-rich Middle East.

Stocks close 1.1% lower

Previous p1

shares did Castillo of First Grade Holdings said. "The data is not encouraging."

"Economists are going back to the drawing board given the unpredictable rise in prices of oil and other commodities. The economy won't get any better in the second quarter," he said.

Most blue chips ended in negative territory, with PLDT common as P2,085. San Miguel "B" fell 1.2 percent to P62. Jes "B" shares slipped 1.1 percent to P92.50.

AFP

Tanduay allots P1B for expansion

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

LIQUOR FIRM TANDUAY HOLDINGS INC. of Lucio Tan is setting aside P1 billion to expand its distilleries in Batangas and Negros Occidental as it remains upbeat over sales prospects this year.

Shareholders on Wednesday approved the budget for 2008 and 2009 that will be spent to expand and upgrade the distilling capacity of Tanduay's facilities in Negros Occidental under Asian Alcohol Corp. and in Batangas under Absolut Distillers Inc.

The distilleries produce new alcohol from sugarcane molasses.

Tanduay recently acquired a 13.86 percent stake in Victorias Milling Corp., ensuring a steady supply of molasses.

The Negros Occidental distillery under Asian Alcohol currently produces 200,000 liters a day of alcohol. That will be expanded to 500,000 liters a day.

The Batangas distillery under Absolut will be upgraded to produce higher quality alcohol at 85,000 liters a day from the current 75,000 liters.

Tanduay also said it would acquire fast-bottling lines for its Cabagnan and Cagayan de Oro plants to increase production capacity.

Tanduay said its liquor sales volume in the first quarter grew 16 percent from the same period last year, with Lucas color growing 21 percent due to the company's aggressive campaigns.

Tanduay also reported its net income surged 106 percent to P195 million in the first quarter from P95 million in the same period last year.

BUSINESS

Unilab's ₱1.52-B drug project gets perks

Amherst to manufacture essential generic medicine

By Nonoy W. Domingo

THE BOARD OF INVESTMENTS has granted incentives to United Laboratories subsidiary's ₱1.52-billion project to manufacture essential drugs.

BOI data show that all-Filipino-owned Amherst Laboratories Inc., which has a facility at the Unilab Pharma Campus in Bifian, Laguna, would be making essential drugs in liquid form at a rate of 269 million milliliters a year.

Amherst is currently registered with the BOI as a new producer of pharmaceutical products in powder, tablet or capsule form.

The latest new project involves the construction and operation of a new manufacturing plant beside its existing plant, which has been commercially operating since 2007.

The new plant, which is expected to start operating in March 2010, will produce drugs in syrup and suspension form and not meant for the supply needs of domestic generic drug firms.

The proposed products include nonsteroid and anti-pain preparations, anti-infective preparations for pulmonary diseases and ailments—drugs for treating tuberculosis, asthma, allergies, cough and cold—multivitamin and mineral products and preparations for gastrointestinal ailments.

According to the BOI, Amherst's project qualifies for pioneer status as the cost of its investment for the project is about ₱37 million exceeded the minimum requirement of ₱30 million for such status.

Pioneer status accords Amherst income tax holidays of up to eight years, duty-free importation of capital goods and other fiscal and non-fiscal perks.

Further, the BOI said Amherst's project was listed under the Investment Priorities Plan of 2007 under healthcare and wellness products.

"Amherst's project is in response to the overall goal of taking the country to a higher level of competitiveness and make us a strong player in the global environment," the agency said.

The BOI added that the project was expected to create 195 new jobs as well as contribute to local government revenues in terms of taxes, licenses and fees.

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Follow through on rice

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

ONE OF THE HUNG OF DEPARTMENT is humility.

Such humility was shown by Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and the Department of Agriculture (DA) management when they met with the Alyansa Agrikultura last May 19 to discuss the rice plan.

We hope they will show the same humility this week when rice farmer leaders from 10 national organizations meet with Malacañang, the DA agency primarily responsible for implementing the "Rice Self-Sufficiency Plan: 2009-2013."

For us Filipinos, the lack of follow-through causes many of our failures.

We are good in analyzing, conceptualizing and rethinking, but are so much so in following through on plans.

We hope the Thais have to grow rice at UP Los Baños when we were way ahead of them in rice production. But since the Thais followed through on what they learned from us while we did not, Thailand today is the world's biggest rice exporter. We, on the other hand, became the world's biggest rice importer.

We hope the follow-through on the suggested improvements to the rice plan agreed upon with admirable humility by DA last May 19 life longer on.

As for the follow-through meeting with Malacañang, it will focus on four key areas: organic rice, irrigation, training and extension and credit and marketing.

Organic rice

It was noted that organic rice was not even mentioned in the rice plan. Instead, the budget for hybrid rice, which requires the heavy use of chemical fertilizers, will swell from P680 million this year to P1.5 billion in 2009. This despite the mixed reviews on our organic rice program.

On the other hand, despite evidence from seven organic rice groups reaping 4-t/ hectares showing an average yield of 4.7 tons a hectare (which is 27 percent more than the 3.7 ton national average), organic rice was ignored in the plan.

At the May 19 meeting, it was clarified that DA management actually supports organic rice as an option. Centro Saka's Oney Bayambatan said: "There is should be explicitly included in the plan, with a program on support it. Furthermore, DA personnel should be instructed to allow the farmers to choose their preferred option (which should include organic rice), and not to subsidize only in those who choose the chemical-based rice option."

Irrigation

For irrigation, the rice plan included a ₱6.8-billion annual budget for 2009 and 2010.

However, this has been the average irrigation budget for the last seven years.

National Rice Farmer Council's Jaime Tadeo said: "There was no increase in effective irrigation areas during these years. Furthermore, cost-third of the existing irrigation systems are not even working here."

There was no increase in irrigated areas as while money was spent for new irrigation systems, other existing irrigation systems were allowed to deteriorate.

Given all the rhetoric regarding irrigation's importance, it was proposed that the irrigation budget be significantly increased. In addition, it was suggested that most of the money be spent for irrigation rehabilitation, which generally costs only a tenth of building new national irrigation systems.

Commentary

The criterion of return on investment, both financial and social, should be followed, instead of political whims. Given this, alternatives such as rehabilitation and water-conserved systems costing as little as ₱10,000 a hectare should be preferred to new national irrigation systems, which cost P1 million a hectare.

Training and extension

For training and extension, Palmeiro's Crispin Aguado described the rice plan as "PO- (People's Organizations) and NGO (Non-Governmental Organizations)-challenged." He said: But the existing rice plan relied solely on government personnel to carry out the rice initiatives necessary for self-sufficiency.

Palmeiro's Joe Temicale added: "But we have not seen private sector-assisted rice demonstration sites, as well as seen extension workers dealing with farmers (but government personnel) are not reach. The rice plan should include a program for financing the PDs and NGOs in achieving rice self-sufficiency, specially in training and extension."

Credit and marketing

Small farmers have great difficulty accessing the traditional banks, which have stringent collateral and paper work requirements. Philippine Development Assistance Program's (PDAP's) Jerry Barrameda suggested: "Why not use micro-lending institutions with good track records to give these small farmers credit? They can use have these requirements. In most cases, accessible loans through these institutions with reasonable are recommended over outright grants."

The Coalition for Rural Women's Trinidad Domingo pointed out that farmers want to sell their palay when prices are high, not when they are being forced (economically) to harvest this because of their need for cash.

She asked: "Why not study a 'quedan' type of arrangement, where the farmers can get 80 percent of the value of their produce immediately and then sell at a later time? Then the farmers, rather than the traders, will benefit from the higher prices."

A choice

These recommended improvements to the rice plan were approved by DA with admirable humility during the May 19 meeting. Will these remain just talk, or will humility and the needed follow-through prevail?

The answer to this question will largely determine whether we will finally be rice self-sufficient, or continue to be the world's biggest rice importer.

(The author is the chair of Agrinomix, former Secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects, and former Undersecretary for Agriculture, and Trade and Industry. For inquiries and suggestions, e-mail agrinomix@hotmail.com or telefax (632) 8522128.)

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What kind of a shopper are you?

From hedonistic, rational and economic buyers to shopping with a cause

Pic. left across: Tia Carrere raising a break at the 35th Annual Grammy Awards on a Philippine-made chair by Hanahmoon

By Karen V. De Asis
Contributor

FOR MANY DECADES, THE process of shopping was driven largely by consumers' needs and eventually, with a rising income, by pleasure.

Until very recently, most consumers were either largely hedonistic or pleasure-driven; rational, economic or value-driven; or simply inert/dependent.

Hedonism, economy and lavishness

Hedonistic buyers are self-indulgent, seek pleasure and shopping enjoyments, are large impulsive and nonrestrictive buyers. An article by Arnold and Reynolds published in the Journal of Retailing identified six reasons why hedonistic buyers shop. These include being motivated by adventure and an enjoyable experience (the adventure hedonistic); gifts yourself with a special treat (the social hedonistic); always compelled to 'buy anything new (idea hedonist). Seek enjoyment in shopping for others (role hedonist) and enjoy 'bargain-hunting (value hedonist).

Rational buyers plan their purchases and think about them extensively before finally buying. They are in full control of their buying motivations and set on the basis of a product or service's perceived need and benefit, functionality and practicality. Measuring cost and quality are main shopping drivers. Brands, whose good quality and value for money reputation precede them, get into the rational buyer's selection criteria. Buying is the result of a logical process—whether the benefit is functional, emotional or social.

Pure costs and savings drive the economic buyer. Consumers typified by this segment are partial to deals and coupons incentives, accounts to extensive discounts and price-offs, coupons, etc.—all in the guise of extending the value of their money. They buy after the price of goods fit their expectations. Whether brands or commodities, what matters to the final user is them.

A 2008 Global Nielsen Consumer Report on Grocery Store Choice and Value for Money lists the Philippines as having the most avid value-seekers, along with Singapore, Portugal, Germany, India and Indonesia.

The lavish shopper, also called the spendthrift, is an erratic an impulse buyer capable of spending money almost foolishly and needlessly. Money is no object. Driving the lavish shopper is the temporary happiness, pleasure, attention and enjoyment one gets from the momentary buying experience. Lavish buyers need the virtues of affluence and designer brands, not many people can buy.

Rise of cause-oriented consumers

The '90s ushered a new segment of consumers, supporting the use of products and services that represents the good side of moral, ethical and social issues. Called the ethical or cause-oriented consumers, this segment buys available products and services that make a strong statement about issues that affect the world and mankind e.g., preservation of the environment, fair trade

NEXT B2-1

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SHANG RESIDENCES

Yoly Ong: We are brand builders above all

YOLY V. Ong

By Roger Pe

SHE DOES NOT MINCE words in saying that some marketers are developing (or have they already?) an attitude of indifference to self-indulgent awards. While last year's Public Ad Congress had the biggest delegate attendance in history, only a few clients showed up on awards night.

Who needs an award without concrete marketing results to strongly back it up? Her deplores the concoction of some advertising practice when creative people are brand builders above all in the real sense of the word.

She is synonymous to Philippine advertising but, no, she isn't basking in that glory. "I only try my best in everything I do. I always believe that the best comes only from the best people who are highly motivated, the passionate ones" says the woman who's not ashamed of saying she loved soaps.

The industry recognizes how she has contributed to its growth and strength. In the advertising, media, PR sectors, who doesn't know Yoly Villanueva Ong? The strong-willed industry pillar, is the first Pinoy judge in modern-day Clio.

The campaigners who built an agency in the middle of a changing political landscape, led and mentored Campaigners and Unity to become one of our most dynamic and multinational shops.

A lot of people still remember "ouyo ga-pareho no lang sho ca nitan," a line mouthed by comedienne Elizabeth Ramsey in one of Yoly's Superwheel campaigns. The brand was then the country's No. 1s selling detergent but now Yoly came up with its after life of ranking numero uno ones.

The phenomenal success of that Gulliver Radjahs also gave birth to "Tide Barrio," a 60-second spoof of the hit movie "Star Wars" and an ABS-CBN all-star cast acapella rendition, "Tide Blue Bar."

Unforgettable high

Yoly had always unwittingly opened doors to aspiring juniors. One of those lucky few whom she took under her wings was this writer, resulting in two overseas trips out of that break: "The King and I," a stage play in cherished version of the Broadway musical starring Gloria Romero as Anna and a multi-day visit of Pinoy Aids playing Thai children.

"Camelot" came next with Marissa Delgado playing Queen Guinevere and two dashing men swayed Lancelot and King Arthur, each ready to jeste on a horseback. Marissa sang a hilarious "Fighting song fighting, on time for lining-lining" line to the tune of "If Ever I Would Leave You." Along with that ad's "magdasi ka" punchline, the commercial became another Superwheel hit.

People also remember how those Lay, Close-Up and Sunsilk commercials were tastefully done. "Yoly seems to have a magic wand, everything she touches turns into something stunning," says a veteran creative director who himself is part owner of an ad agency.

The creative department head of the country's biggest ad agency then (JWT), sang with a band called "Chengle" after office hours. Yes, she sings, have done a number of jingles for TV commercials and composed OPM songs, like the Dawnee Cruz's hit "Speaking Party."

When Pinoy advertising imports were still not in vogue, Yoly was the first Pinoy advertising ogist. She became creative director of JWT Hong Kong, where she produced some of the highest-n creative pieces she's ever done and the title was not just a throw to the industry.

She revived the Creative Guild of the Philippines, was elected its first president and the same award-giving body gave her a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2002 while finishing her Masters degree in Public Administration at the Harvard University in the US.

Honored many times over as Ad Congress and Effie chair, chosen as one of 16 Most Outstanding Filipino Women, what's next with this pretty maverick who's achieved so much in her storied advertising journey?

"I'd like to help the unsophisticated persons of our people, the poorest of the poor. I want to do many things. I don't want to build a reputation that is just focused on advertising," reveals Ong.

While talks about the future of Campaigns and its partner Grey continues to hover around the corner, she cling to sure. Yoly will always go the best of both worlds. Especially, because she always puts her best foot forward.

Mario Simmangolo, one of advertising's most successful creative directors joins Campaigns & Grey as creative consultant in an interim capacity (also to Ongpong Ronaldo's take over). Personally, Simmangolo assumed the same role in McCann.

Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani is coming over on July 25. The 9-11 hero will be the principal guest speaker and will participate in "Leadership in Crisis" forum session organized by the city of Makati.

Judging the world's toughest awards show

By David Guerrero
Contributor

THE UK's DESIGN AND ART DIRECTION awards (D&AD) are described as "the most internationally respected and prestigious creative awards for the design and advertising industries." I was not the task of being named "in the book" when I first entered the industry. My headhunter (optimistically as it turned out) said "you'll be "in the book" within five years."

Getting "in the book" means receiving the judgment of some of the best in the business. And being ahead of around 20,000 other pieces of work all vying for the honor to be considered among the year's best.

In the end about twice as long to get my first one or two pieces of work in there—and late year our agency celebrated getting a couple more. Maybe we weren't trying hard enough. But some of the best known, creative directors have still to pick up the cover of "yellow pencil" reserved for the best of the bunch or the even more elusive "black pencil," which is given only to those pieces of work, which "redefine" their category.

The books themselves are typically landmarks of design in their category. They have been collectible covers. Mixed covers. A cover that reproduced the human genetic sequence and a cover that stuck to your desk when you planted it down (ideas that stick—get it?).

So I was suitably pleased to go when I received an invitation to judge the Poster category at this year's D&AD awards in London. The judging overview gives you an idea of the scale of the show—with all the entries displayed on exhibition stands and the judges walking around to give their scores.

Day 1 started with a huge briefing session with about 250 judges from across categories: TV, radio, interactive, outdoor, direct and out-

THE AUTHOR AT the D&AD judging hall

door design categories. We had a speech from Simon Waterfall, the D&AD president at 9 a.m. Simon is a partner in digital communications company Poke—and previously was executive creative director of advertising agency Mother—and his presidency reflects the growing stature of digital in the creative industries. What we were looking for was expressed in one sentence: Great ideas that are well executed and appropriate to their mediums.

We then met in a smaller jury of 14—also between us we would decide the fate of the world's posters over the next two or three days. One jury head was Jeremy Craigen (as they are known in D&AD) was Ben Papworth of Wieden and Kennedy—who has been responsible for some landmark work on Honda over the past couple of years—winning the Cannes Grand Prix amongst other awards.

You set off with some optimism—how hard can this be? You see lots of good work, some so-so work, and quite a few ideas that look like something you've seen before. Or like each other. As an expert you also confidently point out the flaws in this or that piece of work to yourself. You start to think that maybe "that is the world" isn't that hard to

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SHANG

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Pormaga-B2.1

and fair workplace practice, human dignity, poverty, racism and multicultural issues, among others. Consumer purchase is made irrespective of cost mainly because the product or service's usefulness stands the personal moral beliefs and values of the buyer. Successful ethical brands integrate moral usefulness and beliefs into their business processes strongly supporting authenticity and is not a mere lip-service or a passing trend to gain more profits.

A 2007 study by Landmole Research cited Good revealed that consumers are willing to pay a premium for product that espouse goodness. The same study revealed that no less than 85 percent would like to see companies do more good.

Foreign brands take up the cause

Unilever Bank, founded by Nobel Peace Prize winner Mohammad Yunus is a living symbol of a successful ethical brand whose the overarching goal is to lift the poorest of the poor in Bangladesh from poverty, hunger and inequality. Grameen Bank pioneered an innovative microcredit banking system that provides credit and financial capital to the poorest of the poor women in rural Bangladesh without any collateral enabling them to sustain their livelihood.

Another is fair trade fashion pioneer, People Tree, a strong advocate of fair trade, sound labor and environmental practices. People Tree prides itself in beautifully handcrafted cotton-certified garments and accessories through sustainable partnerships with fair trade and organic producers in developing countries.

Boot giant Timberland strongly advocates volunteerism, encouraging employee participation in a company-sponsored volunteerism program called Path to Service, where employees get 40 hours of paid leave for an equivalent dedicated time and service to a local community or organization. Timberland likewise strictly observes fair trade, fair workplace treatment and wages, and eco-awareness and conservation in its production and shipping process.

Designer clothing fashion brand, Ethus, observes profit while sustaining employment in developing areas of the world particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Ethus accessories inspired fashion is founded by Irish music artist Bono, Ali Hewson and Simon Gregory, and describes itself a socially conscious company.

Luxury fashion retail outlet, Barney's New York recognized the demand for green fashion by introducing organic and eco-friendly products across all its product categories in all its stores. Julie Gilbert, Barney's fashion director, in a remark made to WWD publication said, "Luxury is the future means buying merchandise that has both style and quality, yet is very conscious of organic principles and sustainable business models."

Filipino brands too, take up a cause

Proudly, Philippine-made, Sacayacayan green home furnishings includes a line of biodegradable and renewable earth-friendly home and architectural products made from agro-forest wastes like fallen twigs, dried leaves and barks. These lines are curated by designer outlets and luxury retailers worldwide like Smith & Hawken, American Signature, Tiffany & Bath 65 in Germany, Neiman Marcus and Crate & Barrel in the US, Italy's Antonio D'Ercano

Senate-B2.2

Marketing RX

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not marketing, Bob Stone says: "To be sure, cue, cue signals, and last order more."

Let's now proceed to your question. We'll first diagnose the two conflicting models of how evil buyers choose the brand of evil they

USA-based model

The USA-based model assumes that the buyer's decision strategy is to serve her goal of making the best choice by considering all the alternatives. Evil is said to have prior mood criteria by a good evil brand. If the evil buyer were doing her shopping online, and visiting all the available brands in their websites, this sequential decision-making model would probably be the good measure of reality. But to the setting of the appliance store, it obviously would be inferior in explaining evil buyer brand choice as compared to what your dealers had observed.

Our own research supports your dealers' model. The evil buyer's decision strategy is a process of inspecting just one brand at time. Here's what our observation study had revealed.

The buyer goes to a evil brand that had impressed her. She walks around this evil knocking every so often on its outside panels. She then stands in front and opens the door with them closed; then again opens and then closes. Then she takes out a piece of paper from her bag and tries inserting it where the door clings in its evil body base. Then she opens again, and looks inside the freezer compartment after opening its evil door. She checks if the evil is on and then looks with her hand the floor, sides and ceiling of the freezer compartment. Then she shuts her evil eye on to the bottom drawer where the vegetables and fruits are usually contained. She pulls out the drawer completely and inspects the drawer's shape and inside space. She then goes back the drawer, closes the evil door and proceeds to look for a sales evil to talk to.

When we obtained permission to interview this buyer, we put the following evil questions to our several why-questions. She said she was knocking on the outside panels because she wanted to check how thick or thin (her "word") or "elastomeric" panels were. "Mali ito sipsip-lang sila nang Lipo-on dito-cuts (Their might just be as thin as Lipo cushion ones)."

She was inserting the paper to find out if the door seals tightly: "Kasi pag medyo maluwang eh, mawawalan ng silbing ang function ng indoor at parang sa dalili tapos na siguro lang (If the door doesn't seal well, the evil will just waste electricity as the cold will escape even in the slightest opening)." Her hand-check on the floor and on the freezer because she wanted to check if there's ice forming. When told that the evil brand she was checking was "frost-free," she didn't ask what that meant. Instead she just said: "Parang klaseng ref yan nung unang yaki (What kind of a evil doesn't have ice?)"

When she pulled out the entire vegetable drawer, she said she was disappointed. She said the rear of the drawer could not reach the wall because the entire rear curved in to a third of the length of the drawer. When it was explained to her that the entire space was to give way to the evil's engine, she simply said: "Bawas ang dapat nyan (That's cheating)."

Ad message, selling script

It should be clear that for your brand, its advertising communication as well as its sales representative selling script will differ according to which consumer decision-making model actually prevails. In the USA-based model, to persuade consumers for a brand choice, the ad message and the selling script will focus on the brand's excellence of the evil buyer's primary set of attributes or attributes that the brand distinctively satisfies. On the other hand, in the inspection-processed-based model, the focus will be on "The Drip-it-y" about the evil buyer's "experiencing" of the outside and inside of the evil brand she is inspecting.

From the foregoing, an astute should conclude that consumer decision strategies are limited to just these two models. The applicable consumer decision strategy depends on the product category and how consumers have gotten used to buying and using the product.

For example, consider the compact case where the use of the product requires the basic or absolute minimum of knowledge as in the case of a penlight or its battery. Here, the consumer just goes ahead to the nearest "no-brainer" process of inserting the battery and then switching on. Whenever the consumer does this, the penlight works and so does the toy. In this case, consumer brand choice will be restricted to battery brands she has tried. New brands will have a hard time entering the consumer's decision "rules" because consumers will look at them as too risky.

Other decision-making ways

Our research has identified yet another consumer decision-making routine for the purchase of shirts. When tempted to try some other brands of shirt, buyers of Mens shirts from Penshoppe compare them other brands in Mens. They don't compare and evaluate all brands including Mens to one another as in the USA-based model. If another brand surpasses until and Mens, then the shopper executes the decision to try this other brand. A definite decision to try comes when the comparison leads to the conclusion of superiority in some priority dimension in favor of another brand.

According to our research, the buying of a house is a combo points to yet another consumer decision process. In considering the purchase of a house, for example, a prospective homeowner will first take this account only brands that meet some "must" requirements. Examples of such "musts" would be:

(1) it must be located in an exclusive village,

(2) the village must be far from the pollution of Metro Manila,

(3) the area must have access to clean and safe water, and

(4) there must not be any squatters or slum nearby. In one research, we in fact found a couple who had only one such screening "must." This couple said: "We won't spend time or buying in any real property development unless it's by manila." Once this screening stage is passed, the consumer then considers only those brands that passed. Then she chooses a brand on the basis of some other criteria like aesthetics and pricing, or even "trivial" reasons like "the country club swimming pool has a Mr. pizza's sales's a Pizza Hutzzz! look alike" or "There's a Chow King by the entrance to the evil hall."

So where does all these leave you and your questions?

Firstly, you have to accept the idea that consumers follow a variety of decision strategies that differ by product category and consumer decision-making style.

Secondly, to find out which of these different decision strategies apply to your specific situation and brand, you should observe and talk to your customers. Observe them in action as they are in the process of buying and talk to them about things you cannot explain from what you've observed.

If you want to be persuasive to your customers and motivate them to purchase, craft your advertising communication message and sales script for your brand according to what your observation and interview data require.

Repeat your observation and interview efforts every so often. Keep in mind that even consumer decision routines and decision strategies change over time and at different occasions.

Send questions to Marketing@philstar.com.

UNIVERSITY of Asia & the Pacific's (UAP) Dr. Ramon Quesada (left) is urging investors to take a second look at the current regions of the country as business opportunities abound. At these events, during the Rizal 150 Economy's two-day economic briefings for its clients held recently at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel, Dr. Quesada discussed prospects on the regional level while Dr. Emilio Antonio, (right), also of UAP, provided the macroeconomic perspectives on the national level.

What kind of a shopper ...

From page B1-3

and Sinukuan.

Cool Kids' character-based brand of school bags, shoes and children's accessories is the first Philippine brand to take up the cause of establishing eco-awareness among young children. The brand partners with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the world's largest conservation organization present in more than 100 countries to help raise awareness among Filipino children on the value of preserving the natural environment and the challenges faced by mankind in preserving Planet Earth.

Marketed at nearly half the price of foreign-character based brands, a portion of the sales from every item is donated to WWF. Likewise, with a mini-mum purchase, a child gets a storybook on the adventures of Cool Kids characters, Coco and Bimmy and their magical friends comprised of princesses, fairies and robots whose ultimate goal is to save planet Earth from environmental degradation. The book teaches kids how to reuse, recycle and reduce wasteful consumption.

Are ethical brands likely to stay?

Indeed, establishment of ethical marketing jobs drink brands with a cause are merely riding on the bandwagon of a fad? would do well to think twice or thrice, as brands with a cause are more likely to impact strongly on consumers' lifestyle, motivations and aspirations.

(Feedback at www.harvardsites.com or hdesan@skynet.net.)

'How do consumers choose what brand to buy?'

Q: WE ATTENDED THE SUNSH Mfrs.-er's Consumer Insighting seminar last April. In one portion, you dealt with the question of how consumers choose what brand to buy. You presented a consumer decision-making model that the image section of the UAI (Usage-Attitude-Image) market survey has been using for the largest time. Your example was about brands of toothpaste.

We're in the household appliance business. We just had our UAI ins re-frigerators completed. We looked at the image data together with our dealers. No sooner had we finished the last PowerPoint slide when our dealers challenged the implied assumption of the data about how ref buyers choose the brand to buy. They said they have yet to see a ref buyer, who, when choosing a ref brand, lined up the available brands then evaluated each brand on a set of pre-selected ref attributes that they have prioritized in importance. Then the buyer's choice goes to the brand that the buyer rated highest.

versus other brands on the top price by 2 or 3 preselected ref attributes.

The dealers observe that buyers' choice is mark simplex. Inside the appliance store, a ref buyer looks over one brand that catches her attention. Then after a cursory inspection of the outside and inside of the ref, the buyer decides to buy. If the buying decision is suspended, the buyer goes to just one other brand. She then does the same inspection and then decides between the first and second brand.

Of course, we remember your telling us that the UAI-based model is just one of the many models of consumer decision-making. But what should we do now? How do we validate with research our dealers' version of the "more realistic" way ref buyers choose a brand?

A: To start with, we have to say that we're happy about two things to your info. First, you're willing to listen to your dealers. After all, they are the ones in direct contact with your buying customers. They know and have a personal understanding of these customers. Second, you have learned the discipline of pre-testing in making your own decisions. The father of di-

MARKETING Rx, 2

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SHRAH Jessica Parker (center) heads up Carrie (far left) and other members of the "Sex and the City" clique in the movie of the same name.

Single girls call the shots —with Mr. Big in mind

'Sex and the City' is the female epic of our time—women with freedom and financial power

By Margie David Collins
Contributor

LONDON—WOULD IT have the same pulling power, I wonder, if it were titled "Sex and Coffee-ing"? "Sex and Lacing City"? Never you mind. It's vacuous, frothy frivolous and at times wince-shining bubble gum for the mind, but how can you be negative about "Sex and the City" when it has given millions of women the world over unbridled entertainment to borderline shutdowns, narcolepsy, amusement and measure?

The girls...still full of vroom, with their metaphorical shoes from hell, boring bosoms and industrial-strength manicure—are back. The heels are higher, the boundlessly fantabulous clothes freshly yoked from the runways, the dialogue as dirty as

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Single girls call the shots . . .

From page 61

rent. And who cares whether or not Carrie marries Mr. Big?

It's been four years since we last saw the girls in memorable short bursts of half-hour episodes. The glossy Charlotte has adopted a Chinese baby; Miranda, the lawyer mom, is still with her (cheating) boyfriend, the organ-nymphomaniac Phil (and hates his career switch—and how in Lily Carrie is sending her third novel and is with Mr. Big, their wedding date set. Instead of a diamond ring the size of a small African nation, she asks Mr. Big for bigger closets.

Judging by the number of hearts that have been filled to provide acres of flattering coverage on this side of the pond, we have missed them and are happy to see them again—older, slightly weary around the edges, somewhat more jaded and rewired, but as gleaming, shiny and lustrous as ever, polished and buffed to within an inch of their lives.

Aside from "Sex and the City" the movie, SATC addicts can also tune CH on the cruise CBO's set of the totally successful series, representing six years in the lives of four friends—all singletons who grapple with their careers, their (love)-(sexual)-(with) (man) lives, emotional struggles, minor and major ailments, money, sexual problems, issues of infidelity, incest, adoption, love and lust, in the harshest glare and glint of sun of the most exciting cities in the world.

Positive choice

This is the female epic of our time—of women enjoying their freedom and financial power, and using every wile and trick in the book to get what they want.

"It made being single a positive choice for successful women everywhere, who didn't feel the need to cling on to an energy-sapping, soul-destroying relationship just to be normal," said Sarah Jessica Parker, a New York-based author.

Beyond life, of course, it's still inconsequentially, a man's world, but SATC sends being a single woman in possession of a well-paid career very fashionable indeed.

Money talks a good talk, and money on weekgasms. Jimmy Choo feels wafts into Dolce boutiques, bars and restaurants, takes charge and calls the shots. In this series, the girls shopped till they dropped, partied till they passed, reeked of the night's debauchery and made love, as Carrie said, like men—without guilt, with sheer abandon and undiluted pleasure, to very, danger our fingers.

"For the first time in American history, many women in their 30s and 40s have as much money and power as men, or, at least, enough to feel like they don't need a man, except for sex," said Candace Bushnell, whose semi-autobiographical column in The New York Observer inspired the series and her series-sister ego, Carrie.

Celebrating men

Except that the girls do need men, and not just for sex. Apart from the wallet-nourishing and achingly trendy clothes and shoes, men are all the girls ever really talk (and bitch) about. Older, younger, divorce, bi-(dis)-gamy, commitment-phobic, fall, short, rich, poor—whether the Carrie Bradshells of the world like it or not, a woman's best protection and helpmate in life is still a man.

The girls love and hate them; need and want them; pursue and spurn them. SATC shamelessly celebrates men—their looks, lingering scent, grooming habits, wardrobes, chat-up lines, prospects and, er, their equipment and staying powers in the unarmed combat department.

"We brought sex into the living room," said writer-producer Michael D'Kitty. And smash cheesecake.

Yet good or bad, sins cost living rooms curse frank and formerly blush-inducing discussions and deconstruction about sexual fantasies, sexual practices and sex with. We now know that ashes of Jessica Rabbits blow up, as did the Manolos, Prada and Louis Vuitton.

However, King said that, to the film, "there's still sex in people's lives, but not as much taboo-busting sex. If you're still making the same mistakes at 41 as you were at 27, maybe you need to call someone."

KIM? Mr Davis, Parker and Cynthia Nixon missing is Kim Cattrall

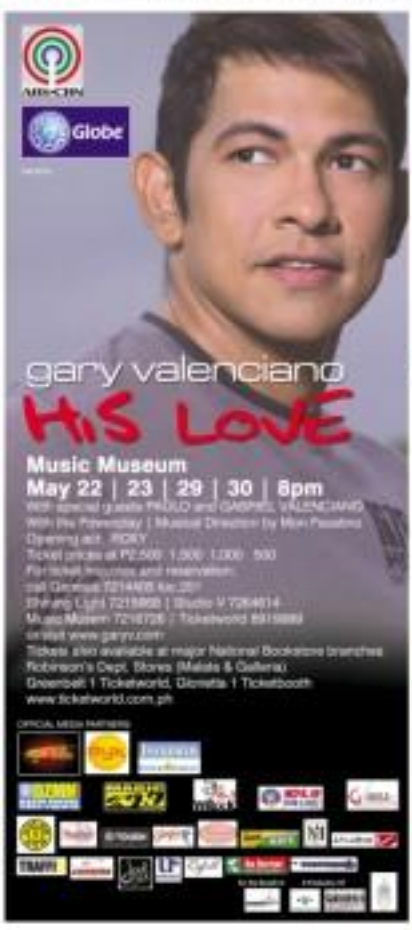
NEGOTIATING the city on vertiginous heels

FOUR years hence, as gleaming and lustrous as ever

"Sex and the City" also shows a big, bright light on friends relationships. We are sexpots, here to stay! And on the special friendship between females, which is probably God's way of apologizing for some of the relatives He landed us with.

And, the hard footsteps say "Sex and the City" never really removed beyond the shallows and probably could threaten television forever!

This is entertainment, for young womanists as well as old cynics, and if "Sex and the City" fails to reach a small-fraction of a knowing smile, you probably do need to talk to someone.



Fabric softener supports Philippine Fashion Week

HENKEL, THE GERMAN BRAND leader in laundry and homecare and maker of the fabric softener Vernel, is sponsoring Philippine Fashion Week.

This is the country's largest ready-to-wear fashion event, now on its 11th year. It has launched several designers from Manila, Cebu, Iloilo, Bacolod and Davao. Designers show their creations for free, spending only on the production. It is the vision of founders Audie and Joey Espino to build a formidable fashion industry.

Philippine Fashion Week opened May 20 and runs till June 3 at the SMX Convention Center, SM Mall of Asia, Pasay City.

VERNEL makes clothes soft; gives long-lasting fragrance.

Glam Up for The Philippine Fashion Week 2008 @ the SM Mall of Asia

See and be seen when the celebrities of the fashion industry converge on the Philippine Fashion Week 2008 at the SMX Convention Center and SM Mall of Asia from May 26 to June 3, 2008. A celebration of fashion and design, the Philippine Fashion Week is an annual event conceived by the Council of Philippine Designers in Europe and America, where upcoming and famous couturiers share the catwalk to display their latest fashion creations. Fashion Week is normally staged in popular fashion capitals like Paris, Milan, London, New York and key cities in Africa and the Asia Pacific region like the Riviera Manila. And who better to host it but only the largest mall in the country and third largest in the world, the SM Mall of Asia. The SM Mall of Asia embraces style, that's why it's a favorite destination of Pinoys and foreigners alike for superb entertainment, good food, and great shopping). Enjoy a showcase of a wide variety of sophisticated international fashion labels and equally competitive local brands that define chic and style.

The Philippine Fashion Week (PFW) 2008 is already the 11th installment of Runway Productions put together by fashion grease Joey and Audie Espino. PFW is staged twice a year to showcase the fashion for Spring & Summer Collections on the 2nd quarter and Holiday Collections every 4th quarter. It is the longest running fashion week-long event in the Philippines and dubbed as the "OLYMPICS" of Fashion in the country. It's a 9-day event of style overload, comprising of catwalk presentations, accessories shows, fashion photo exhibits, press or media events, glamorous after show parties, gorgeous models and hot, hot, hot clothes from ready-to-wear to haute couture.

This year the PFW promises another extravagant show, get ready to be awe struck by the roster of creativity from this year's 1,750 astounding couturiers by the 120 fabulous designers presenting, including regional talents from Cebu, Iloilo, Bacolod, Cagayan de Oro, Davao, Pampanga, Naval and Quezon province. PFW is the biggest venue for fashion, creativity and talent in the Philippines, it has to date launched over 500 design collections and 130 local fashion labels. So, Rachel, your way to the SMX Convention Center and SM Mall of Asia from May 26 to June 3 and share the spotlight with movie stars, celebrities and fashion gurus that support this prestigious event every year and make your own fashion statement. For show schedules and details please visit www.runwayproductions.com.

PHILIPPINE FASHION WEEK 08

Learn the art of beading

DECORATIVE pearl beadwork

COMBINATION of wirework, strings and pearls

FLORAL beadwork in rose quartz and seed beads

PORTIA ILEANA LECTURIO OF Beadmasters takes beading to new heights with designs that range from traditional motifs to modern intricate wirework and floral headwork.

She is conducting classes this June on Basic Beading, Classic Stringing, Creative Wirework, Floral Headwork, Advanced Beading, etc. Classes are small and intimate and on a first-come, first-served basis. Reservations is by appointment only.

Lecturio was the first to produce lace wirework. Many of her designs have made their way abroad to specialty boutiques and major department stores, attracting buyers from Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Japan, Mexico, Taiwan, the United States and France.

Returned recently abroad, Lecturio attended several art schools in New York, including Parsons School of Design, National Academy of Design and Art Students League. She also studied bag beading in Taiwan with a Japanese master whose works are commissioned in Paris.

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Fashion heritage

AS THE CELEBRATION OF Heritage Month enters its e-nine, one of our national treasures is remembered—the terno.

The terno was not the invention of any designer but the evolution through the decades, with various designers innovating on it to meet the demands of modern times. One designer, Mercy Sulleza in Lara Higgins, transformed the terno to virtual art form.

Higgins portrayed a patriotic fire she has always seemingly inspired by butterfly wings, and versified one proposition so that the skin mixed each individual weaver.

The heather, fitted at the waistline, turned into skirts that might have an asymmetrical panel sticking out on one side, or into layers of diaphanous material that fell in gentle waves.

In a gown worn by Lolita Borrero, the sinuously draped lines of the skirt were caught with double fishtail bows at the back. An other gown, then First Daughter Linda Cruz wore at Malacañang began with a point at the ankles, rising diagonally upwards to meet into a bustle at the back and then flaring out into a graceful train.

The signature draping might cover the entire torso, from sleeves to train, as in a gown worn by Maria Rosa Moreno, the pale fabric diminished by the inserts of black with white crewel lace seamlessly joining the two.

The skirt might also unfold in an embroidered spiral down into a graceful short train, or bunch into a bubble at the ankles.

Such unusual details contributed to a flamenco-like feminine shape that made Illustri a popular choice of society ladies such as Linda Garcia-Cuenco, Mely Garcia-Lopez-Hechanova, Mary Stella Lizarza, Connie Ejercito Estrada, Maria Gabaldon Campos, Rose Vergara-Rodriguez, Genoveva Ignacio Barns and Margaret Sy-Go.

If you have any photos of women wearing ternos by Illustri or the artisan terno themselves, call Illustri Legacy at 4932277 or 0917.3295940; e-mail illustrilegacy@gmail.com.

STIFFEL Available only in leading drugstore nationwide.

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GOINGS ON

Filfest celebration of music and dance

TO JULY 2008: A COLORFUL CELEBRATION of Music & Dance" is ongoing on Saturdays and SUN. 25 of Meralco Life Theater in Makati. Featured artists are pianist Nena del Rosario-Villanueva and cellist Nicholas Lucas, Dance Drumbeat Ensemble, Ballet Philippines, FIL-Harmonia conducted by Gerard Salonga, Rachelle Sandhu, Joy Mallen Samara, Beda Marietta, Lionel Gozo, Lemuel dela Cruz, Ronnie Abalajon, Xavier Pagcaliwagan and clarinetist Ralph Ismail and Artist Laura Abiab.

Musical at Bonifacio High Street

The center's Passions Fest opens today with a grand musical event called "Fusion" on May 10, 8 p.m., at Bonifacio High Street. The event features the Metro Manila Community Orchestra, University of the Philippines Jazz Ensemble, Mai Bautista and professor Chino Toledo as musical director and conductor. "Fusion" is open to the public. For free seat reservations, seat slips may be claimed at the Serendra Concierge, and will be given to the first 200 customers on a first come, first served basis. Call 8860920.

FCAP "Taste of Manila" in SM Megamall

The Food Caterers Association of the Philippines (FCAP) will host the fifth "Taste of Manila" activities until June 1 in Megamall's Hall E, 3/L, SM Megamall. "Taste of Manila" is a yearly event where top players of the catering industry showcase food catering preparations and service, table setting, cooking demo, food sampling and sale. Participants' packed desserts, main dishes, salads and cocktail drinks are also featured. To avail of hall booth or their whole office hall by participating caterers, fee includes priced at P10.

Business opportunities

Catch the latest Business Opportunities Series by SavWagsit My Small Food Club, Mealsway and Magnolia Chicken Station. A cooking class featuring Marinades and Sizzlers Part II at San Miguel Pure Foods Culinary Center is slated May 30, 1:30-4:30p.m. at Legaspi cor. Eagle Sts., Br. Legaspi Park, Call 8020000, 8892803 and 8729658. Limited slots available so take reservations now.

UP fellowship

The 66th Alpha Phi Beta Fraternity Chancery, Inc. will hold its Mater Mentor Fellowship, to be hosted by the 75th Alphans, at the Presidents of MSGP Masonic, Manila Hotel, on May 30, 7 p.m. Alphans belonging to Decade 70 are advised to contact their batchmates and for present Admission is free. For mail order is also advised. Contact Ems at 4468445, fax 376-1004 or email chancery_sec@yahoo.com.ph

Tribute to Puccini

To celebrate Italian National Day, a Tribute to Giacomo Puccini concert will be held June 2 at Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Complex in Roxas Boulevard, Manila. Featured artists are violinists Jhonnes Labrador and Jon Gallenero, pianist Jonathan Peñalver, tenor Al Gamatero, soprano Rachelle Gervacio and UST Symphony Orchestra conducted by Herminigildo Flavero.

Mall anniversary

Sta. Lucia East Grandmall turns 17 this month. Mix prices in Shop & Mash ongoing until May 31 for every P500 single purchase in most nationwide. The Generation Fest 2008 festivals will have a fashion show on May 30 while Lil-Bo Stars 2008 grand finals will be held May 31. Shows and bags for ongoing until June 30.

Waxing promo

Divers of California Nails & Spa has cancellation either the skin or wax with a combination of chamomile, lavender and olive oil enzyme wax which is used mostly for sensitive areas. Until today, the spa offers 15% discount on body scrub treatments when you avail of any waxing service. Call 843-3764 or 909-7720.

Flores de Mayo

Designers Jordan Cambe, Jonte Martinez, Johnny Abad and Ivan Gallaguirre will participate in the Flores de Mayo on May 31, 3 p.m. at Tandoteon in Fronteras Verde, Pasig.

BEAUTY

Editor Thelma Simon San Juan

LIFESTYLE

Contributing Editor Ria Francisco-Prieto

Get the smoky eye look

Kelly Mina, Tricks of the trade

It's dramatic, sultry—a definite eye-catcher

CRAZY, easy, cool look

On Father's Day, show Dad how much you love him. Melt his heart with steak that melts in his mouth. He'll certainly look forward to the next one. That's the magic of Melo's.

Melo's

Ayala Malls

The moon is out.
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May 30-31: 4p to 12 midnight
June 1: 4p to 9pm

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Free parking for four (4) hours for a minimum single receipt worth P1,000.00 dated May 30-31, 2008.

2. FREE MOVIE TICKETS

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3. FREE GAMES

Pay P150 for a P200 Powercard load and get two (2) Yellow Jumper games for FREE from May 30-June 1, 2008 at Timezone, Solaire at Glorietta 4 and Greenbelt 3.

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				9				
				3	4			7
		6		5				
	7	2	4		6	9	3	
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4			3	7				
				2				
5						1		6

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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answers to previous puzzle

6	5	3	7	4	2	9	1	8
9	8	7	5	1	3	6	2	4
2	4	1	9	8	6	7	5	3
4	1	2	8	6	7	5	3	9
7	9	6	3	2	5	8	4	1
5	3	8	1	9	4	2	6	7
8	2	9	4	3	8	1	7	6
1	7	4	2	5	9	3	8	8
3	6	5	8	7	1	4	9	2

CELEBRITY zodiac Brent Javier

Brent Javier's healthy habit

WHAT PART OF YOUR daily routine helps with your workouts?

I take protein into a form shake twice a day to help build muscle, since I'm naturally quite thin and I want to build more muscle mass.

I have 2-hr pre-active after a workout and before sleeping. This also serving to okay for both guys and girls who are working out and want to bulk up a bit or gain mass.

Of course, it's best to supplement this with a healthy diet, including lean meats such as chicken, and meals with a lower carbohydrate count.

Make-Brave, GM about hairs

Don't just jot it down on any ordinary notebook. Only Corona, Green Apple and Blue Feather Notebooks can do justice to your great ideas and extraordinary creativity. With every page so smooth, clean and white, it makes your notes stand out so clear and readable. It inspires you to write on and on giving you the drive to succeed.

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CORONA
NOTED FOR EXCELLENCE

Wash-and-wear hair

HOW MANY OF US GO to a new stylist to achieve a new look and love it only to shower the next morning and find out we cannot recreate the look because we do not know how to blow dry?

A Korean stylist known only as Mister YS addresses such a dilemma. After having your hair washed, he will ready your hair's texture, the shape of your head and face, to minimize problems like frizz, pouf or rebellious wave.

He then explains to you, drawing on a mirror, what he intends to do. The process, including the haircut, takes about an hour so when he is done cutting, your hair is 90 percent dry and you know exactly how it will fall every time without the skilled blow-dry.

You can walk out of the salon, confident that the next morning your hair is still wash-and-wear.

MAKEOVER 911

Kissy Sulat

My problem was severe thinning of the crown so that my scalp was visible there. Mister YS snipped layers to give the hair volume. Now nobody believes me when I tell them I have thin hair.

(A features by Ms. YS cons P1, 250.)

Note: Thin shampoo leaves your scalp tingling, hair shiny and tame, but it is nourishment, as if you do not like the cold, tell the staff right away so they can use regular shampoo.

If you are interested in trying Mister YS, you may reach him at YSS Salon, 3/F, The Fort Strip Bldg., Bonifacio Crescent, Fort Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. Call 810-4185966.

E-mail the author at kissysulat@yahoo.com

Get the smoky eye look

Turn page B4

The smoky eye look has been a long-standing trend. Every season we see it on fashion runways and on celebrities.

It has been reinvented in various ways and done in all kinds of gradations and colors, but it has the same effect every time...dramatic and sultry while giving clear definition.

Both eyes can look good on anyone, but it's the application that may prove daunting. Bea Serrano, make-up artist, asks Pagaduan shown us how to achieve the look with ease:

ALWAYS go from **to** going out

Step One: BASE

After prepping the face with light foundation, apply crème eye shadow in a neutral color (Pagaduan used Sha Ultimate crème eye shadow to M and brown) over the lid, just until the brow bone. This will ensure a more intense color while making the eye makeup long-lasting.

Also: this step guarantees a clean, er application. "Crème eye shadows allows the pressed shadow to stick, preventing the powder from falling on the under-eye," explains Pagaduan.

Step Two: BLEND

Brush the powder eye shadow on the crease of the eye, and blend outward so it looks right above the crease. Pagaduan says, "Not the colors, do not limit yourself to black. There are many colors you can experiment with that would look great on smoky eyes."

Step Three: LINE

Line both upper and lower lash lines. Pagaduan used Sha Ultimate Drawing Pencil in Matte Black) to intensify the look. When lining the lash lines, start at the inner corners and draw outwards, making the line thicker as it reaches the end.

"And for a more precise effect, you can try using liquid eyeliner," Pagaduan suggests. Finish the look with two coats of mascara and a nude lip.

Tip: If you do not have crème eye shadow, try swirling your makeup brush before applying powder eye shadow to achieve the same effect.

Sun Protection 101

LONG EXPOSURE TO the sun can cause sun damage and skin aging, so don't forget some skin protection even if you're planning to get a tan.

Consistently preventing skin damage from the sun's UV rays (not just during summer) should be a vital part of your skin care strategy. Meticulous UV protection may not only prevent premature skin aging, but can be the single most cost-effective thing you can do to retain a youthful appearance as you age.

Of course, before grabbing the first SPF-labeled bottle on the shelf, you need to know the real score about UVA, UVB and SPF.

■ UVA radiation penetrates deeper into the skin and is the major contributor to skin aging and wrinkles. It also contributes to the development of skin cancer. UVA rays pass through ordinary glass, hence the UVA in sunglasses.

■ UVB (shorter wavelength) has a relatively modest effect on skin; wrinkles, because most of it is absorbed in the epidermis (outer skin layer) and does not reach the dermis where wrinkles form. But it also contributes to the development of skin cancer.

■ SPF stands for Sun Protection Factor and is a rough measure of how well a sunscreen protects the skin from UVB rays. There are different degrees of SPF from 2-70.

Think about where you're going to have long you're planning to stay in the sun. A good sunscreen should protect from sunburn, skin aging and skin cancer. More importantly, a sunscreen must provide a high degree of lasting protection against the two key types of ultraviolet radiation, UVB and UVA.

Isabel Reyes, Backstage Pass

I spoke with friend Marilou Francisco-Montenegro, who recently had her beach wedding this January. Let's hear this beach baby's beauty secrets.

"I love the breath just like I love sweating, arts, sports and fashion. Unfortunately sun exposure is not the greatest thing for our bodies. I make sure I use sun protection every time I leave the house. I use the VMV Hypoallergenic Armada Sport Sunblock for my face everyday. It is not greasy and provides a great base for makeup. It is an SPF30 full spectrum sunscreen for both the face and body and is water resistant, with UVA/UVB ratio at 0.89/0.11.

"I make it a point to wear huge sunglasses whenever I have to walk under the sun when I do errands. This protects the entire eye area and most parts of my face. I have freckles, so I maintain healthy skin by using an organic vitamin C toner, and I alternate between the Clinqi Whitening line and some products from a dermatologist.

"When I am at the beach, I reapply sunblock on my face and shoulders almost every 30 minutes. I also wear a sunvisor and my shades. I try to be aware of my daily intake of water, fruits, vegetables and natural antioxidants like green tea.

"Staying away from wine and caffeinated really make a difference as well. Taking care of my skin and health is very important to me because I know aging is something very hard to reverse."

MARILEN Faustino-Montenegro

"Thank you for the memorable time, and for helping me regain my pre-baby figure!"

– Authentic customer statement, August 9, 2007* (not a paid endorsement)

This client flew all the way from Sydney, Australia to get her slimming and body sculpting treatments done by Zunic.

"After 3 babies, it's definitely a must to visit Zunic on a regular basis!" she enthuses. "I'll be back again to revisit this experience. Congratulations to your wonderful and friendly staff!"

Having a baby is a wonderful experience, but a lot of women have trouble regaining their pre-pregnancy figures afterward.

Pregnancy can cause you to put on additional weight, which can be difficult to get rid of after your baby is born. And childbirth can leave unsightly stretch marks that can make you look (and feel) unattractive.

That's why Zunic has special programs and specific procedures to address these problems.

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Treatments are conducted while you stretch and comfortably on a plush couch, without the sweating, anxiety, and pain associated with traditional slimming methods.

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*Like most Zunic clients, this customer values her privacy, and we respect that. No celebrity "endorsements" are made or implied in this or any Zunic advertisement.

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Three ways to bronze beautifully

TAN-TALIZE

WHEN ASKED WHAT self-tanner tops my list, I always say, "Shiseido," referring to the brand's Brilliance Bronze Quick Self-Tanning Gel and the rest of the SPF lineup.

I remain a big fan of those products, but, as of this week, three other products have lurched their way into my stash.

Lancôme Hâle Bronzer Transfer-Resistant Bronzer Leg Spray. Being cooped up in an office (and following a strict response dress code, for sure) often results in ghastly, pasty white legs. This tinted Dolce-glow makes salons this dilemma, leaving you with gorgeous, gleaming gams fit for a stroll on the beach...even if you're smack in the middle of the city.

Darphin Intralissi Soleil Tanning Gel. The thing about regular self-tanners is that once they're applied, you're not exactly sure how they'll turn out or how even. Choosing a tinted version takes care of two things: one, the bronzy pigment serves as a guide as you apply, lowering your chances of bloody spots and streaks; you get a slimdide dose of bronze from the first application, and when the color deepens as the day wears on.

Muriel Chua, Backstage Pass

Lancaster Satin Bronze Dry Oil Spray. I came across this Bronzer-enriched oil toward by accident during a last-minute invitation to a charity beauty mix. That means it still be a bit of a challenge to replenish. In the US, it is only available at media-only retailers, and to date, only in fragrances. But trust me, any spray of this lovely, complexion-boosting leaves the classiest sheen to skin and an unwavering scent that compels you to go to-to-face-to-face-to-escape. Mixed with like waters and clear skies. Talk about like to a beach!

Muriel Chua is the former beauty editor of Cosmopolitan, Seventeen, and Glo Magazine. She is now based in New York City. Visit MyBeautyBuzz.com.

Photos courtesy of www.lancaster-luxury.com and www.lancome.co.uk

LIFESTYLE

Hollywood yoga beauty is new face of Adidas

KARMINAH MARIE THE HOLLYWOOD-based yoga beauty is the new face of the adidas yoga collection.

Known as the forebear of the now ubiquitous yoga instructor who are bringing a new level of athleticism to yoga. Alongside renowned Adidas athletes, she will be part of various global retail, online and public relations initiatives that celebrate yoga as a performance sport.

"Rainbeau is an inspiration for today's women," said Adidas head of women's Claire Mohamad. "She embodies both athleticism and passion, and exudes positive energy within the sport making her the perfect fit for our women's initiative. She will continue working closely with Adidas designers to develop innovative yoga products."

Starting with the Spring/Summer 2008, Mars will be the key symbol representing the adidas Yoga and the Yoda's Powerpuch Yoga-apparel ranges in retail.

"I could not be more thrilled about the opportunity to work with a global brand like Adidas. Working with amazing athletes like Lolo Jones, Asa Ivanovic and Heather O'Reilly will showcase how yoga can be used as a tool to improve individual performance and success across all sports by discovering new muscles, preventing injury and teaching breathing," said Mars.

Rainbeau Mars holds the Yoga Master status and developed the practice "Rainbeau," a unique hybrid of yoga, martial arts and core conditioning. It is a choreographed combinations of breath-centered yoga flow with dynamic targets and twists, invigorating your strength with the fluid heavy muscles to the joints, all while maintaining flexibility. Prior to establishing herself as a yoga professional and creating seven successful DVDs such as "Yoga for Beauty," Mars worked as a model and actress appearing in numerous high profile films, commercials and music videos.

The Adidas women's Spring/Summer '08 collection is available at Adidas stores in Trinoma, Robinsons and Power Plant Mall.

Yibi can never go wrong in this Adidas Adilette core top and knit capri, perfect for your regular gym or yoga sessions. The Adidas Adilette core in pink (fortune) is just one of the many top designs for this season.

STORES Specialties, Inc. SVP Amor Huang, US Embassy commercial counselor Judy Reinke, US CM Elizabeth Quiambao, popular US Ambassador Kristie Kenney, Banana Republic marketing and PR director Rosemary Young, Banana Republic visual manager Eugene D'Mello, Banana Republic regional director Richard Li, and SSI brand manager for Banana Republic Karine Bacaro

CHRISTINE Lacuna-Sandejas in Banana Republic

TECH Napoleon, Cris and Monique Villanueva and Sofia Ricalde

Perfect day for Banana shopping

ZELDA Kinsle

YOUNG, top pick Isabel Francisco and Samantha Argumedo-Mossey

MAIA Soriano in Banana Republic white Tonal Georgia

LIA Ramos and Marianne de Lanza

BRITTEN Ambassador Peter Beckingham and wife Jill

MIRIAM Quiambao in Banana Republic silk dress and Clara Mariangela-Samargard in printed Banana Republic dress

IT'S THE BRAND THAT made "safari fashion" what it is and classic. Yes, darlings, Banana Republic has captivated Manila's finest with their grand launch of its first ever in-the-country collection and name the brand's cool RTW lines for men and women, as well as trendy shoes, colorful handbags and accent jewelry.

In the Philippines, the brand is exclusively distributed by Carand Clothing Specialties, Inc.

The inaugural was superbly hosted by Amor Huang, executive vice president of Stores Specialties, Inc., and by other resident Banana Republic executives.

Invitees witnessed a fastpaced fashion show featuring Banana Republic's Spring-Summer '08 collection, pronto. Models cashayed on the ramp with giraffe print dresses and tops, khaki bodycon and crop, and linen-cotton blends, in orange, green and yellow.

Meanwhile, the menswear was awesome, definitely making the men's line of Banana Republic a must-have for every guy, darlings.

After the show, our looked around and saw the invitees shopping assiduously that not the cash register ringing real loudly.

Okay, who were there? Super popular Unilever brand Ambassador Kristie Kenney; Amor Augusto Zobel and wife, multitalented Lizzie Zobel; Manila Peninsula's popular GM Brand Raederer and wife, Hada Tesio; SSI's fine lady Nina Huang and daughters Nikki and Isabelle; Star and Eddie Kiefer, Wylene Dizon, Carmi Martin, Maia Francisco and Veronica Scott.

Style-setters Tweetie de Leon-Gonzales, Clara Mariangela-Samargard, Divine Lee, Joanna Lhuillier, Paul Sarl, ams and Bevilleen Fernandez were their fave Banana Republic picks.

Amor Huang looked pleased at the festival. We looked a winner, darlings.

There was an endless serving of scrumptious hors d'oeuvres while drinks flowed and flowed, courtesy of Ralph's Wines and Spirits, natch!

Banana Republic is at Greenbelt 5. It is soon to open at Bonifacio Market.

Celia Basa's 85th

Before the day Cecilia Bernice Basa turned 85 years young, darlings, she had organized a dealie for a no-class celebration. She had said she would like to have a simple family get-together.

But her oh so adorable daughters decided her wish. They wanted nothing less than a truly special event for her, memorable.

"Celia," as she is fondly called, is the widow of Mario Gonzalez Basa, "the Father of Philippine Boxing." Their sweet, late lassie blessed with six ear-catching daughters—Betty Tanchuling, Flory Montelibano, Sari Lagoc, Ceci Cruz, Corbina Dizengoff and Lissa Lamug—and three sons—Jon, Mario Jr. and Conde.

Altogether, the Basa brood has produced 27 awesome grandchildren and, take note, pulongpo, six great grandchildren.

As expected, it was really a great reunion when the children came home to spring a surprise for their Mom.

Well, Cely was not only WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Jeanne Arevalo

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using YRL Photo Solutions

FABULOUS daughters of our fantastic celebrator: Betty Tanchuling, and Flory Montelibano. Second: Sari Lagoc, Queen for a Day Ceci Basa and Cud Cruz. Front: Corbina Dizengoff and Lissa Lamug

CLASSMATES. Pilar Sanchez, the celebrator Cely Basa, Milo Posadas and Cora Rodriguez

to the Queen City of the South as the renowned Blanca Wolo Plaza Cebu held its very own bridal fair, pulongpo.

The super-exciting event offered the crowd a sinfonya of wedding themes to choose from.

The venue featured gorgeous and dazzling wedding gowns by brilliant designers from Cebu as well as a lineup of top wedding photographers.

Marco Polo is definitely one of the premier destinations of choice in Cebu. It continues to deny of providing only the love as it hosted this year's bridal fair.

Now in its second year, bridesdays at Marco Polo Plaza, presented together with the Cebu Fashion Council, in cooperation with Metrobank Fiesta Card and Wedding Essentials Magazine, had everything for aforehand couples could ever want for their weddings.

The fair closed with an exquisite and awesome fashion show of wedding ensembles by Cebu's most in-demand couturier such as Philip Rodriguez, Pebz Tu, Ney Bayubis, Dhas Rodriguez, Gil Rodez, Jun Escarlos, Albert Arellia, Rhenie Verlongo and Cary Santiago.

The fair-day happening was a success with the help of Jazz Jewels, Travel Club, Ayala Center Cebu, Crystalize Accessories, Graphic Star, and Paper Heart and Sealand.

Yeah, it was a truly magical bridal fair, pulongpo, as the Marco Polo Cebu, with its brilliant and cool Chit Hawa Bisnar, could offer.

Wedding announcements

Businessman Romulo Lanot-Sandoval and Socialite "Kate" Ortaliz of Rosebud City announce the forthcoming marriage of their daughter, Catherine, to Giuseppe Santoro on July 4, to be held in Chiesa di Santa Maria della Consolazione al Foro Romano in Rome, Italy.

ROBERTO M

TOKENS Mendozas, Cebu First Lady Margot Osmeña, Rosebud Dela, Metrobank Card Corp. VP Joel Abad and John Gozon

MARY Sue Smith, Ramon Quiambao and Marco Polo Plaza events manager Carlo Bermoso

AT CEBU'S wedding fair: Professional photographer Tad Maliandro, Cebu First Lady Margot Osmeña, Metrobank Card Corp. VP Joel Abad and Marco Polo Plaza's popular GM, Hans Baart

SM-UNICEF BRING CLEAN WATER TO THE CHILDREN OF MASBATE

The SM Supermalls and UNICEF recently launched its WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) program, which highlights water and sanitation services delivery to schools and households—two of the most serious problems in the country.

Central to this is the SM-UNICEF Drink for 2: A Toast to Clean Drinking Water for the Children of Masbate program, which was recently launched at the SM Theater Lobby at the SM Mall of Asia.

Every purchase of SM bottled water will entitle UNICEF to a donation of 25 centavos. This small amount is enough to give two children in Masbate access to safe drinking water for one day.

"Buying bottled water is a simple act of giving two children the chance to have safe drinking water," says SM Prime Holdings President Hans T. by "Just imagine if all of us can give this chance not just for two children and just not for one day, but for over 2,000 Masbate children for the rest of their lives."

The fund will be used in the construction of WASH facilities and provide technical and capacity building assistance for the recipient barangay. Initially, this project will benefit 400 households with 500 population and six primary schools with 1,850 children in Masbate and Cebu.

It is noted that Barangay Umabay is one in the municipality of Milaba in Masbate, which is one of the poorest provinces in the Philippines. Scarcity of water and improper toilets are the main problems. With the project, Umabay Elementary School is just one of 11 schools in the municipality of Milaba with such facilities. The program has made operational a total of 150 sanitary facilities and 14 water supply facilities in 13 selected schools in Masbate to date.

"Without safe drinking water and sanitary toilets, children are most vulnerable to diseases and even death," says Mr. Colin Davis, UNICEF Deputy representative.

Bhanie Pisona, a 14 year old student of Umabay Interior Elementary School shared with the audience the sad situation of their municipality during the launch.

"Prior to the program, we just relieved ourselves in the grassy areas and sharing water since we don't have a well," said. "We did not drink enough water and did not habitually wash our hands because of the shortage of clean and potable drinking water. Thanks to SM and UNICEF, that need changed."

Buy SM bottled water and support its Joint Drink for 2: A Toast to Clean Drinking Water program with UNICEF. It is available in 500ml bottles at all SM Supermalls and selected stores nationwide.

SM and UNICEF partnership is symbolized in a toast to give clean drinking water for the children of Masbate. Shown in photo are (L-R) UNICEF Deputy Rep. Colin Davis, SCMC President Anna Garcia and UNICEF's Health and Nutrition Chief Dr. Marissa Golob.

UNICEF's Health and Nutrition Chief Dr. Marissa Golob and Int'l Consultant Corporate Alliance Mr. Clement Chauvin.

The need of children to survive and thrive was emphasized more in the Sesame Children sang the very inspiring song, "Potato" in Smokey Mountain.

Buy SM bottled water at SM Food Court and save 2 children in Masbate.

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Frisbee finals set tomorrow

By Anne Cabrera
Contributor

A HUSHED SILENCE FALLS OVER THE crowd as Bill Clark on a console blares shortly right after a voice on a microphone says, "Three years... none!"

The audience's eyes are all on a team of two; a man who throws a plastic disc into the air while his partner leaps and successfully grabs the disc in his mouth—the crowd breaks into wild applause!

The team is composed of Archie David and his dog, a German Shepherd named Agos.

The game is Fetches

In their first try, the duo have two minutes to throw and catch as many Frisbees as they can. But they are tied with the team of Guillermo Reynoso and Solo, a Belgian Malinois, at 12 points. **In both teams hold the tie-breaking match.**

The time limit has been reduced to just one minute. If Agos catches it on a further throw, he earns higher points. The last 30 seconds is announced and David goes into a **throwing frenzy** to try to get the last few points.

Both dog and man are tense. The concentration on Agos' face makes it seem as if he completely understands how important this game is to his master.

For David, the pressure has set in and the flight pattern of the Frisbee becomes more erratic with each last-second throw. He grimaces as the buzzer signals the end of what to him was probably the shortest one minute of his life. Handler and dog sprint down out of the ring to wait for the score to be read out.

This is not an Olympic sport. But the crowd's response to it is virtually the same as **in the Olympics as it roars with baited breath** for the final score by the judges.

The tabulator whispers to the commentator. The official scores: 12. Reynoso and Solo's score: top 11.

Archie and Agos win by a point!

Drama

Such is the drama behind the 3rd Annual Alpo Frisbee Challenge, which kicked off at the SM Mall of Asia last April 27 with a mesmerizing pop squad and "disctraordinary" dogs in red choo-hooting outfits.

The prodrome brought out the best fashion

ALETTA Yulgoso and Kaye with huns Hilary Isaac and JM Rodriguez

NICE Rodrigues and Poppy

ion dogs: Besides, a Chihuahua in unique strike-a-dog gear, hogged the news.

For the frisbee competition, a particularly spectacular fine was that of Nice Rodrigues, an ordinary yet owner with no background in professional dog training. She and her "sister" (among Pinoy's, Poppy, was third place in the inside elimination round.

Amid the Belgian Malinois and Retriever who made it to the finals, Poppy stands out with his very open looks—upright ears, dark snout and shoe-light brown fur.

Poppy was a rescued dog and he has **bloomed under Rodrigues's patient coaxing** and others of affection.

Rodrigues admits she is not confident they **will win over the finals, having the lowest qualifying score of 12.** But says she is proud to **have shown that native dogs or mongrels are** just as quick and intelligent as purebred dogs and can also be trained to catch Frisbees.

Tagaytay

By the time the competition moved to its third leg at Canyon Woods, Tagaytay news **about the prizes, trophies and medals had already** piqued the interest of many dog trainers.

The finalists at Tagaytay all had higher scores than any team from the first two legs. **The first place winners were a German shep**herd-golden retriever mix named Kaya and owner Alexis Yulgoso. They had racked up a whopping 47 points.

While a popular strategy was to place the **dog at the farthest distance before throwing** the Frisbee, the Alexis-Kaya team opted to go above it to an easy-going manner with Alexis throwing at a leisurely pace and Kaya dropping the Frisbees he caught whenever his **lady master called his name to get ready for the** next catch.

Catch the Alpo Frisbee Finals on May 31 at SM Baguio, starting 1 p.m. It will be hosted by Marc Nelson, Regine Tolentino, Maverick and Ariel and Hilary Isaac.

Dress up your dog and join the "Doggie Fashion Parade" at 3 p.m. to get a chance to win cash prizes & gifts from Alpo.

The Frisbee finals start at 4 p.m.

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Robinsons Supermarket Lucena · Robinsons Supermarket Puerto Princesa · Robinsons Supermarket Roxas · Robinsons Supermarket Tagbilaran · Robinsons Supermarket Tagum · Robinsons Supermarket Tuguegarao · Robinsons Supermarket Tuguegarao Extension · Robinsons Supermarket Valenzuela · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 2 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 3 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 4 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 5 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 6 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 7 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 8 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 9 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 10 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 11 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 12 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 13 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga Extension 14 · Robinsons Supermarket Zamboanga 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Perfect day . . .

From page E1

Among the guests expected to attend the **wedding from Manille are Ambassador and** Mr. Philip Llanillo, banker Rene Lacson of Monte Carlo; Jewelmer's Carmen Linares Ilu and husband Benjamin Ilu; Tom and Cecile Oppen with their daughter Rhea; Cindy Oppen ; and businessman Bobby Villanueva and Bibing Villanueva.

Samson is a businessman who owns pharmacies and apartments in Rome.

Ornaka is a portfolio manager for the Credit Suisse Bank in Rome.

The bride's wedding gown will be done by Renzo Rutteroni of Rome.

The grand reception will be at the Castle Villa Mondia, where Nora Ursino recently had spent his 40th birthday.

Also soon to be altar-bound are well-liked realtor Riggs Antonio, son of Ambassador Jose "Tony" Antonio and vibrant socialite Mikela Reyes; and fashion plate Mary Shalom, daughter of businessman Tom Manoni and Violet Navarrete.

The wedding is set on June 8 in Reverie Dinner reception is at the Discovery Shores.

The wedding gown and ensemble will be designed by Jun Escarela, darlings.

CASTLE wedding reception for Southern belle Catherine Gerald

Gina Thelma Sioson San Juan

LIFESTYLE

Contributing Editors
Jessel Epperson
and Kiggie Alcuin-Sudhwani

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FASHION

Take a bow

'Sweaty Girl'—and Minnie Mouse's—signature accessory is now the rage on the runway

story on page F3

style inspiration: Minnie Waldorf of 'Sweaty Girl'

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Contemporary Asian fe

Text by Anne A. Jumbero
Photos by Chito Nuisa

Luxury, stature and distinction.

IN THIS DAY AND AGE, all the above amount to what is a charmed life. But unlike in the past when one was to the manor born, today one works to create a charmed life.

One such creation is this sprawling, private urban oasis designed for a select few who know how to cherish life's little moments. It's a first-class living experience for those who want to live a life their family deserves – in this verdant, eight-hectare residential subdivision.

With only 286 Asian-contemporary-themed residences, Mahogany Place III by SMCI Homes is designed to give your family all the luxuries of space and privacy they aspire for to live a quality life in today's cramped-in-city living environment.

Tree-lined avenues that features landscaped planting strips and pedestrian-friendly sidewalks keep kids always safe, whether they're cycling with friends or out for a stroll around the neighborhood with the family.

Sensitive to the demands of the growing family, Mahogany Place III is located just a few minutes drive to the central business districts of Bonifacio Global City and Makati, exclusive schools such as the International School and British School and premier entertainment hubs like Bonifacio High Street and Market! Market! World-class medical institutions, such as St. Luke's Medical Center-BGC and Makati Medical Center, are also nearby, as well as the domestic and international airports.

Within Mahogany Place III are exclusive lifestyle amenities, including a mini-mart so one doesn't have to go far for emergency grocery needs. There's also a sauna for complete relaxation and a 28-seater mini-theater for private movie viewing.

To achieve the contemporary Asian feel, interior designer Wilmer T. Lopez created an elegant fusion of traditional Filipino features and rich Cambodian elements. The high ceiling and large windows result in the luxurious feel of space. Features such as these create an environment conducive to quality lifestyle.

Using well thought-out spaces and clean lines, Lopez designed an intimate living room perfect for relaxation. The space is utilized with restraint, grace and style, creating an atmosphere of balance and harmony.

"It is important for this family, whose parents work in highly stressful environment, to feel solace, calm, refuge the moment they step into their home. You also have to make use of good lighting to achieve that," Lopez said.

Rich fabrics and prints, and gold leafing are highlighted by dramatic lighting. Touches of Filipino appear in wood furniture in leather and rattan, while Cambodian accents and décor, such as silver bird cages and scalloped mirrors in silver, adorn the area.

The kitchen, equipped to prepare Asian gourmet cuisine, has a multifunctional island as focal point. The kitchen can be used as an extension for family entertaining, or there is a special nook for two on one side for that intimate dining experience.

Kitchen stools are in dark, carabao leather for that Asian touch. Indirect lighting gives the area a warm, cozy appeal. Such is the subtle touch of luxury.

Modern Oriental is the theme of the master's bedroom. Gold details are found in the oriental-inspired headboard. The room has a playful, casual chic atmosphere, created in the use of color – from turquoise to sunset and earth tones. A looping floor lamp stands be-

RELAXED ELEGANCE. A casual area for entertaining, the living room, with dramatic lighting, has an intimate, cozy atmosphere. Modern, Filipino-inspired furniture is in wood, leather and rattan. Rich fabrics and prints spell quiet elegance. Silver leafing provides greater luster – that subtle touch of sophistication.

HAUTE CUISINE. The kitchen island, available in single-detached units, has a special nook for intimate dining for two. Display cabinets, over/gold granite top and splash board, accented by bedroom lighting effects, give the kitchen that first-class ambience. Carabao leather-covered stools add the Asian touch.

eel

THE living area owner sabin originally designed and conceptualized by interior designer Wilson K. Lopez can be transformed into a rectangular table or fashioned into a L-shape like our L depending on the room's space

Elegant
usion of
raditional
Filipino and
quaint
Cambodian,
plus
mmenities
create
quality
ifestyle

LUXURY. The distressed wood-veneered cabinet adds a hint of rustic Asian charm to this modern foyer setting. Large sculptural vases in silver leaf bring life into the area. Cambodian-inspired home decor adorns the cabinet.

Beyond the usual amenities

do enclosure, night-lockup residential enclave offering first-class amenities and concierge services await the residents of Mahogany Place III. Tucked in the quiet side of the ever-growing city of Taguig, it is highlighted by sprawling parks, lush gardens, tree-lined avenues, and pedestrian-friendly streets - all until finding its abode in the luxury of wide living spaces that has now become a rare commodity in modern city living. Pamper yourself and your family in a life richly deserved.

Mahogany Place III goes beyond offering the usual community amenities. Laid out for your maximum enjoyment are a wide selection of distinct amenities not usually found in other residential subdivisions like the clubhouse sauna, 35-seater mini-theater, dance studio, poolside dining, mini-mart, and a landscaped tiered amphitheater with a center stage.

The place is designed to provide you with a true leisure-rial lifestyle. Careful and detailed planning are executed so that the development becomes the last thing you need to worry about when you step out of the office to your family's wellbeing.

OUTDOOR AMENITIES: Adult pool, kiddie pool, pool deck, picnic grove, gazebos, children's playground, sandbox, basketball/tennis court, parks and gardens, landscaped amphitheater with plaza

INDOOR AMENITIES: Lobby lounge area, main function hall with bar and kitchen, sauna, poolside dining, mini-mart, mini-theater, dance studio, game room, fitness gym, refreshment area, second-floor lounging area, view deck

FACILITIES: Grand entrance gate, 24-hour security, perimeter wall with electrified fence, Wi-Fi at the Clubhouse, water station, laundry service, garbage collection facilities, overhead water tank and cistern, utilities area

SERVICES: Move in assistance, leasing program, car wash service*, , shuttle service*, , utilities application and payment assistance, realty tax payment assistance, general maintenance of common areas, newspaper delivery*, , pest control, organizing of community events, taxi call in service, dissemination of services, spa home services, messenger services, chandelier maid services

*Services available for a fee

HOME TYPES

SAMARA: Three-story duplex

Lot area: approximately 120 sq.m.
Gross floor area: approximately 200.6 sq.m. (Unit A), approximately 212.6 sq.m (Unit B)
Ground Floor: living, dining, kitchen, maid's room, T&B 1, foyer
Second Floor: master's bedroom, master's walk-in closet, master's T&B, family hall
Third Floor: bedroom 2, bedroom 3, T&B 2, study area
Exterior areas: 2-car garage, porch, patio/garden, laundry/service area, balconies

BELLA: Two-story single detached

Lot area: approximately 240 sq.m.
Gross floor area: approximately 301.1 sq.m.
Ground Floor: living, dining, kitchen, bedroom 2, T&B 1, maid's room, maid's T&B, driver's room, driver's T&B, foyer
Second Floor: master's bedroom, master's walk-in closet, master's T&B, bedroom 3, T&B 2, bedroom 4, T&B 3, family hall
Exterior: 3-car garage, porch, patio/garden, laundry/service area, balcony at the master's bedroom and garage deck

MILENE: Three-story duplex

Lot area: approximately 120 sq.m.
Gross floor area: approximately 251 (Unit A), approximately 251 (Unit B)
Ground Floor: foyer, family area, powder room, maid's T&B
Second Floor: living, dining, kitchen
Third Floor: master's bedroom, master's T&B, bedroom 1, bedroom 2, T&B 1
Exterior: 2-car garage, lanai, laundry/service area, balconies on the 2nd and 3rd floor

ANGELINA: Three-story single detached

Lot area: approximately 240 sq.m.
Gross floor area: approximately 315.0 sq.m.
Ground Floor: living, dining, kitchen, den, powder room, maid's room, maid's T&B
Second Floor: master's bedroom, master's walk-in closet, master's T&B, family hall
Third Floor: bedroom 1, bedroom 2, T&B 1, T&B 2
Exterior: 4-car garage, porch, lanai, laundry/service area, balcony at the family room and master's bedroom and deck

Call DMCI Homes at **888-3333** or visit our website at **www.dmcihomes.com**.

PLAYFUL. This modern-oriental master's bedroom plays around the color palette - turquoise, cream and earth tones - with luxurious beddings in cream, linen and silk, and gold details in the headboard. There is a chaise lounge in one corner, accented by a hanging floor lamp.

Bust belts
Skinny belts with skinny bow closure

The dress
Tie a yellow ribbon on a sleeveless

"It" bag
Take a bow, Marc Jacobs

That's hot!
Mick Dolce's cute costume feels are this season's wear!

Bowtie me up

Photography: Jason Quibilan of Scription Studio (09175252193)
Styling: Jenni Epperson
Model: Kelly Ritz
Makeup by Irene Go of Georgette using Georgette's Spring/Summer '08 Collection
Hair by: Tonya Payangyang of Bankilay

SELPHY
Canon
Delighting You Always

SPOTTED ON RUNways everywhere: bows of all sizes and colors, on everything, from jackets to lapels, pumps, hats to hairdos.

The call '77 for "Gossip Girl" is proving to be a fashion harmonies with its tween girl Blair Waldorf (Leighton Meester) inspiring this look.

Blair's character is the opinionated fashion maven who rocks the prep school uniform with the prim-to-vixenish headband with her signature bowtie.

The heroine's apparel has certainly come a long way from those days when it was Minnie Mouse's signature accessory. Today, apart from being the favored prep schoolgirl adornment, bows are taking a bow at runway shows, from Karl Lagerfeld and Moschino to Gucci.

Many designers have opted for a blown-up version of the bowtie for an ultra-feminine effect. At Moschino, big bows embellished necklaces, the hair, and the occasional shoulder. At both Gucci and Zpernunu, smartly tailored bows evoked cool sophistication. Appearances notwithstanding, we were a different take on the army-navy look: a big floppy white number on the neckline.

At Karl Lagerfeld's fall 2008 show, bow ties replaced skinny ties, perking out from the jacket's lapels—a twist to the traditional accessories on women's tailoring. Marc Jacobs was all tied up as well, with his flirting 2008 collections featuring oversized versions on hats, blouses, and hair accessories.

Louis Vuitton bows were all over the toes. Skinny pumps were be decked with bows and sparkles and paired with a new chunky line of costume jewelry.

Here are bowtie-ishly quirky bows designed by Mick Dolce—Mendiz's own Philip Treacy—taking inspiration from the bow rage.

Jenni J. Epperson

E-mail the author at jjtalk@gmail.com

Top choice
Fuchsia and bows are a fun and feminine combo.

Contributing Editor
Ria Francisco-Prieto

LIFESTYLE

Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan

Achieve paths of enlightenment amidst hustle and bustle

With the pulse of enlightenment with blissful Zen gardens at The Grand Midori Makati. A new residential haven rising in the heart of the country's premiere business and lifestyle district.

This gem is designed to let you find your mind and soul from everyday worries. Breathe in, relax, and achieve inner peace.

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Proper undereye skincare

KNOCKOUT!

Ria Francisco-Prieto

BEAUTY

"I USE Lo'Bar Eye Concentrate every day. I get great results, and I actually feel it working."—Aubrey Miles, actress

FACT: THE SKIN UNDER OUR eyes is very thin. It is seven times more delicate than the skin on our face. It doesn't produce oil, so it is prone to wrinkles.

But if there is an area in our face that we often overlook but we really have to take care of, it would be the skin around our eyes.

Just yesterday, I walked in on my husband and his friends talking about "it" girls in the '80s, and I was shocked to hear one guy's comment about a formerly hot girl who now sports crow's feet. Now I know why women have the hoorah to be a little vain. Guys can be very critical.

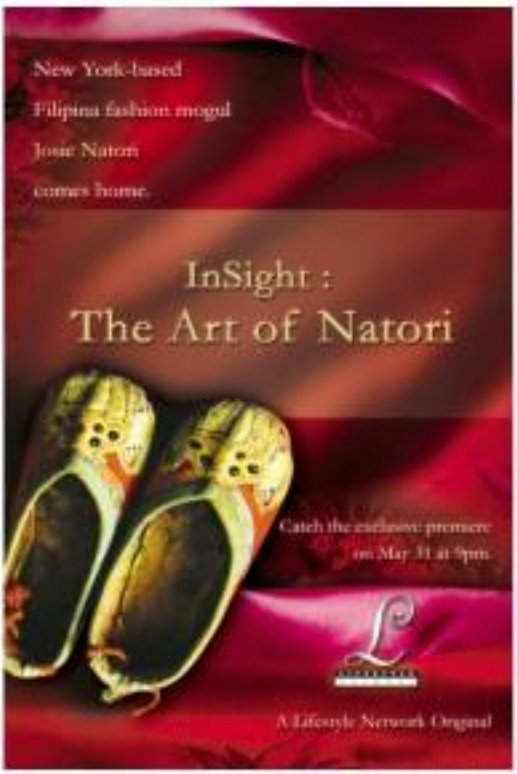
When taking eye cream, just pat it onto skin, never rub. Use your ring finger since it is the gentlest of your five digits. Rubbing the cream in will tug at your skin and just encourage the formation of wrinkles.

There are many eye creams available. I suggest having one for the day with SPF and a rich one for nighttime. There are also creams for dark circles, puffiness and dull eyes.

What eye cream do some of our glam comes swear by?

"I USE Clinique Derma White. This brightening eye cream is hydrating and instantly helps lighten the eye area. I use it in the morning and at night. It's sunscreen eye protector SPF 15. It's also very light. I can wear it even under makeup, not like other eye creams that cake up with the powder."—Liz Almario, entrepreneur

"I LOVE Chanel's Beauty Infinite eye cream because it's also greasy and helps prevent fine lines and aging AND a potent mix of antioxidants and vitamins."—Marie Q. Carino, Town & Country fashion and beauty director



Students look forward to school year

By Kenneth Mathieu del Rosario

THOSE STUDENT ACHIEVERS can't wait for the next school year to start. They're looking forward to graduating on top of their class again – like they did last school year – or they can claim a very special prize, and that is a chance to be treated once more to a day of luxury in a world-class resort as a reward for their hard work, just like what 17 valedictorian elementary, high school, and college students in Alaminos, Laguna (a province 74 kilometers south of Manila), experienced last April.

"It felt good to know that our efforts are recognized and rewarded," said Dina Shareen Tolo, one of the students in the activity, who topped his class with six medals. "I live very near this resort but this is my first time to enter and explore the place."

The resort he was talking about was Hidden Valley Springs, a 45-hectare tropical subdivision paradise located 5 kilometers away from the Alaminos town proper. It's a tourist destination famous for its, well, hidden valleys and its crystal clear water in each of its six pools.

"Taking them deserving children to the resort is a small way of giving something back, something to inspire them to do better," said Jun Wuthrig, the man responsible for coming up with the idea of gifting the valedictorians with the trip.

A former president of the Rotary Club of Alaminos and the Association of Barangay Captains, Jun would constantly think of ways to reward the good deeds to his locality. In 2007, his final year as barangay captain, he came to Hidden Valley Springs on the invitation of its owner and president Ed Wilson, a co-founder of the Rotary Club of Alaminos and the Association of Barangay Captains.

Wilson, equally wanting to give back to the community, gave his own thumbs up. And so, last year saw the pioneer batch of 11 valedictorian students who were treated to a day in the resort. This year's batch is the second.

The students' day started early on April 8 as they prepared for the trip. Wearing their respective school uniforms (as Jun requested), they trooped to the resort, with swimwear and costume in their bags.

The students came from 17 schools – both public and private – in 13 barangays in Alaminos. It was just before lunch time when they arrived in the resort where they were treated to welcome drinks and a hearty lunch buffet, all-you-can.

Then started an fun- and camaraderie-filled day filled with more fun activities. There, they spent the whole afternoon swimming until they decided to have a break and enjoy the van backrides that only Hidden Valley Springs can offer.

Rimarked as the best of Mr. Wuthrig, the resort features hundreds of trees, some of which are centuries old. "Every thing in this place is kept natural. Even though trees are upkept, are replanted (plant) new ones to maintain the place's beauty," said Sara, youngest of Wilson's four sons and the resort's operations and marketing manager.

The students were particularly fond of the climbing tree, believed to be one of, if not the oldest trees in the area. It is said to be over 1000 years old. A hidden falls also delighted the guests as they gamely posed for pictures next to the backdrop.

They explored the resort some more, enjoying the facilities in the area which included a mini-golf course, a basketball court, and a billiards pool area, among others.

"It's good that these kids get to go out and learn things outside the classroom. It's a great way to socialize and meet others like them," said Ezra Mendiz, principal of Bay Montes in Alaminos, as she supervised the children during the activity.

Still full of energy the kids once more dived into the waters that many Koreans and Russians visit in packaged tours all throughout the year. With all the blessings his family has received over the years, Wilfie was by-now beautiful. If he had his way, he'd like to keep his low profile, afraid people might mistake his kindness to have ill-advertising.

"But this activity is really close to my heart, I can't help but be overwhelmed with joy when I see the children, and not us," he said. "I hope this inspires other people to do the same – reward the deserving and the good-doers."

Jun, who tirelessly took pictures of the children, was elated that the students were having fun. Currently president of the Alaminos Gun Club, he said it was not the easiest thing to organize such an activity as he had to personally call up each school to send in their valedictorian students.

His duty did not end there as he also had to ask the permission of the students' parents and principals.

"But, at the end of the day, it's all worth the hard work," said Jun, who reiterated that this is his and Willie's project as private citizens. "These students now have more thing else to look forward to." Hint, one of the students who graduated at the top of his class in San Agustin Elementary School, said: "This really inspires us to do better. Hopefully, when I graduate in high school, I'll still be valedictorian so I could go back here again!"

Scholarships

MANY FROM VALEDICTO
this initiative in the Philippi
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education plays as a critica
line to the bright and gradua
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this, ACE's mission has alre
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Back to school with Cool Kids

FOR PARENTS ABOUT TO START THEIR BACK TO-school shopping and want to get great stuff that is affordable priced, good quality and great looking, here's good news for you. Fantastic International, exclusive distributor of Cool Kids brand of bags, shoes, toys, plush items, gifts and accessories presents its first complete Filipino character-based brand offering a whole line of children's products.

The company has a well-deserved reputation for quality, affordability, innovation and service – providing the best possible children's merchandise across all market segments.

The Cool Kids brand is front lined by Coco and Kinny, ambassadors of nature preservation working together with their magical friends to teach children how to care for the environment and how to reuse, recycle and reduce unlawful consumption). Coco and Kinny's magical friends include - The Whiskers - fun furries teaching kids the value of information, like Royal highness - relaxation kids on how to stay green by keeping clean, The Dazzling princesses - teaches kids to avoid wastage, The gifts Owls - tells kids how to recycle and reuse, Space Voyagers - fights aliens brings solo exploit natural resources from earth, Rekonstruction - fights those who exploit and waste energy, Megabot - fights illegal loggers, and Speedy the car - fights smoke belchers. Cool Kids characters are bound to every Cool Kids trolley bags, backpacks, lunch bags, pencil cases, pilot type bags, plush, gift items and other accessories. And for parents, it is noteworthy that Cool Kids items are priced at least 15% than branded products yet quality is never compromised. Cool Kids products are already in duty are promised. The different collections, which are made available at all SM outlets and department stores nationwide, rightfully match your kid's individuality and for those shopping in. Till during the back to school season, every single receipt purchase of Cool Kids products worth P600 entitles the shopper to an exclusive Coco and Kinny Synchronized clock depicting Coco and Kinny's adventures to save the planet earth from environmental degradation with the help of their friends. The book was written by noted children's storybook writer, Bong Alba and designed by artist, Gigi Angelo Alba.

Part of the sales proceeds of Cool Kids products will be donated to the World Wide Fund for Nature Philippines (WWF). Fantastic International has tied up with WWF and are working together to reach kids all over the Philippines how to care for the environment.

So next time you do your back-to-school shopping, remember to think your options. With Cool Kids products, you not only provide your kids with quality products but you also contribute in saving the environment. You save on your budget, and you save the environment.

Striders

Side-Stitched Series

Striders. Shoes for Kids have side-stitched soles which make the shoes sturdy to withstand those extra strides of childhood.

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Side-stitched means MORE DURABLE

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Robby Rabbit welcomes everyone back to school with these delightful offers! Get a Robby Rabbit Top worth P199.75 for only P20 when you buy any Robby Rabbit Apparel worth P100. That is more than P150 savings right down into your pocket. Also, get a Robby Rabbit Portfolio Bag with Sling worth P249.75 for only P30 each time you buy a Robby Rabbit Square Trolley, and a free Robby Rabbit Board Pen for every purchase of a Robby Rabbit Horizontal Trolley. Shopping is surely fun when you get freebies like these. Robby Rabbit Apparel and Trolley promos are ongoing until the end of June. Robby Rabbit is available at all SM Department Stores - Children's Accessories, Luggage, Children's Wears, Infant's Wear Depts., Accessories Stores, Goldilocks, Toytown, and Metro Deli; at Sta. Lucia Dept. Stores; Ever Department Stores; Grand Carnival and Characters Unlimited Kiosks at Festival Mall, Alabang; Riverbanks Mall, Marikina, Magic Star Mall Turbo; and Metrowide Mall Turbo. They also have a wholesale outlet at #555 Juan Luna Street, Binondo Manila. For further inquiries, please contact 8911-888 (8911229).

Back to school? Get an Acer

THE REALITY IS THAT A COMPUTER IS NOW AN INDISPENSABLE tool when it comes to school-related work, whether for research, for preparing nice-looking school projects, or even in coming up with name tags, a must at the beginning of every school year. But computer really does it all. Sure, parents find the computer as an ever-reliable ally, the perfect partner in assisting their kids for their school work. With the computer at their disposal, they now have the ability to do assignments, graphic cards, even multi-photo tables printed via illustrator boards, all done in a jiffy and minus the hassle of doing it all by hand, a tedious task experienced by parents prior to the invention of computers. With this reality on hand, Acer, one of the world's top computer manufacturers, always makes it a point, year to end year out, to come up with computers that are not only superior in performance but also affordable and most of all, easy-to-use. Given the kind of busy schedules parents have these days, it is of utmost importance that computers do the school job required by school children as uncomplicated and as effortless as possible. For example, the Acer Aspire 2920 is the perfect solution for kids whom their parents may want to have their own notebook computer as their trusted school partner. The Acer Aspire 2920, even if it comes with a smaller 12.1-inch WXGA TFT Crystalbrite LCD monitor, is not a scaley-it-terms-of-video resolution display because of its Intel Graphics Media Accelerator X3100 with up to 358MB DVMT (1.0 MB dedicated, 256MB shared) video card and a 160GB SATA hard drive for storing all those important projects, notes, and other school files. And, if their kids are into more advanced stats of school work like graphics and truly multimedia presentations, then the Acer Aspire M5440 is a great partner. With its embedded high-definition audio with 7.1-channel audio support for crisp, clear sounds and integrated NVIDIA GeForce 7100 graphics solution for exceptional graphics display playing in Acer's awesomely huge 18-inch widescreen LCD monitor, it would make kids become more eager and excited to do their school work, and make them flash their wide toothy smile every time they are in front of the Acer Aspire M5440. It's easy to brag about these things but it would be even more accurate and assuring if your head will online nearest authorized Acer reseller and ask for a simple demo from team friendly and trained personnel. It's not really a tedious task if the bottom-line objective is to make sure that your children perform their school work on-track and on-time. After all, it is their grades and ultimately their future, that is at stake here.

A Bic world, billions of responsibilities

BIC PENS JUST REACH 60 IMPRESSIVE BENCHMARKS! YES, THE trusted stems when it comes to high quality and ingeniously designed ball pens (and more) reached 100 billion!! Seriously, somewhere in the world, has just chosen the 100 billionth Bic ballpoint pen. Since 1960, Bic ball pens have been made available for everyone. May it be in the United States, Europe, Brazil, Asia and other parts of the globe, you'll be sure to spot a Bic ball pen.

Bic Cristal, introduced over half a century ago to the ballpoint pen innovations. Bic has successfully

granted by ACS

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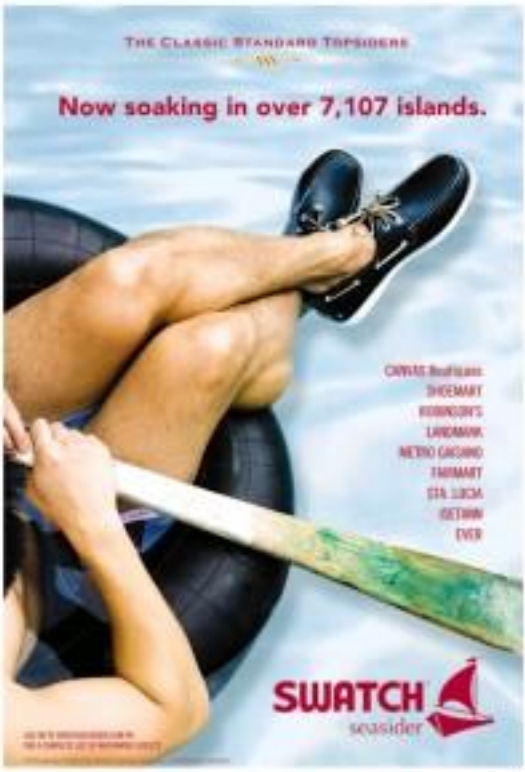

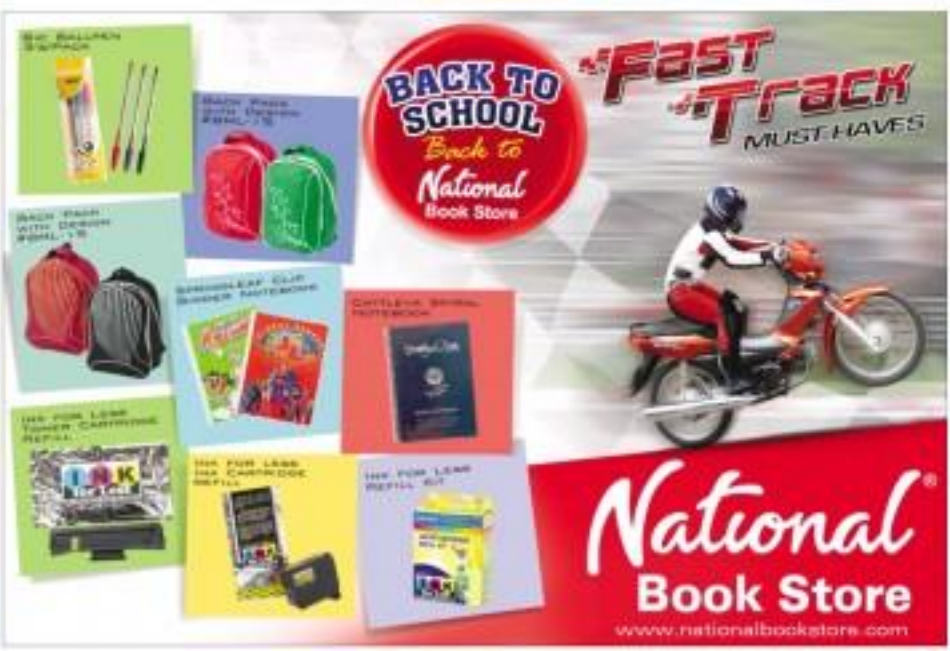

Start the School Year with a bang!

Back to School Sale

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Sale Period: May 28 to June 17, 2009

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Kellogg's
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Nestle
P56.50

Jacobsens
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Fountain
P79.75
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CDO
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Kellogg's
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Golden Bamboo
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Vaseline
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Raid
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Ariel
P227.75

Aunt Jemima
P181.50

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Kellogg's
P230.50

A1
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Brown & Haley
P115.50
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• Siomgeddas P36.75/kg • Pineapple Big P42.00/kg • Fuji Apple P60.45/kg
• Avocado P57.75/kg • Celery P78.75/kg • Native Spinach P99.75/kg
• Fragrant Pears P94.80/kg • Washington Apple Extra Fancy P89.25/kg
• Young Corn P94.50/kg • Chinese Broccoli P131.25/kg • Durian P190.25/kg
• Spring Onion P99.75/kg • Red Globe Grapes P190.50/kg

Makati Supermart Alabang - Filinvest West cor. Commerce Ave., Alabang Town Center, Alabang-Zapote Road, Alabang Muntinlupa | Tel. 840-7000 / 840-7200 | Store Hours: 8:30 am - 9:00 pm

Greenhills • Greenhills Shopping Center • Tel. 721-0000 / 721-1717 • Store Hours: 8:30 am - 9:00 pm | CashCarry Supermarket - Alabang cor. South Superhighway • Tel. 841-7200 / 842-3100 / 842-3400 • Store Hours: 8:00 am - 6:30 pm

Store Hours: 8:30 am - 9:00 pm

LIVING Stars

By Ermie G. Ndaño

Welcome to the colorful world of Carlo J and his Donna V

HOME BODY

Komiks *by design*

By Rayani San Diego Jr.
Photos by Edwin Bacasmas

INSPIRED BY VERSACE, Elle and TV presenter Donna Vic Villa describes the home she shares with husband, komiks creator and movie director Carlo J. Caparas, and their two children, CJ and Peach, in a posh village in Muntinlupa.

Donna V, as she is fondly called by Carlo J, is passionate about home interior. "This idea started with Carlo. Building and selling houses is her hobby, she explains.

If you ask Carlo J, however, this latter sidesteps when Donna V's personality. "It's her — very glamorous. If I were to build my dream house, it'd be a simple log cabin," Still, Carlo admits, he has allowed Donna V's imagination to go "wild" in decorating the three-storey home.

She herself says she envisions the place as a den of luxury. She has filled it with her favorite things, mostly trinkets and accessories gathered from trips here and abroad.

"I always bring home souvenirs, preferably things that are old and memorable. Things that would last more than a lifetime, and forever remind us of the good times we shared in our travels," she relates.

Standing like silent sentinels at the entrance are two red-copper chevalin horse heads — an like, they could confuse the family pets.

On the porch is an art work from Sweden, made of baked porcelain and depicting Montmartre building Artist

KOMIKS VI

CLOCKWISE from above: Brass Chinoiserie chandelier in the patio. Marble fish, crystal parrots and miniature horses

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Promo period is from May 15 to July 31, 2008

Redemption until September 30, 2008

See flyers for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit # 1985, series of 2008

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1 INDIANA JONES
2 CARE GIVER
3 SEX AND THE CITY
4 21
5 INDIANA JONES
6 CARE GIVER
7 INDIANA JONES
8 IndieGrind: Sa Pagtapon ng Mabibiyaa
9 INDIANA JONES / IRON MAN
10 BOY CULTURE

ERMITA

1 INDIANA JONES
2 SEX AND THE CITY
3 CARE GIVER
4 IRON MAN
5 CARE GIVER
6 INDIANA JONES
7 21
8 WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS / INDIANA JONES
9 OKAY PA RIN / INDIANA JONES

METRO EAST

1 WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS / INDIANA JONES
2 CARE GIVER
3 CARE GIVER
4 SEX AND THE CITY
5 IRON MAN
6 INDIANA JONES
7 INDIANA JONES
8 21

NOVALICHES

1 CARE GIVER
2 INDIANA JONES
3 21
4 IRON MAN

PIONEER

1 21
2 CARE GIVER
3 INDIANA JONES
4 SEX AND THE CITY

BEAT THE LINES and get your tickets in ADVANCE.

Tickets are now available at the following locations: Galleria, Manila, Metro East & Pioneer.

STRICTLY Rating 2 (All Ages Admitted) IN THEATERS JUNE 6 MOVIEWORLD

STA. ROSA

1 INDIANA JONES
2 21
3 THE POSSESSED
4 CARE GIVER

LIPA

1 INDIANA JONES
2 CARE GIVER
3 WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS
4 CARE GIVER / IRON MAN

DASMARIÑAS

1 THE POSSESSED
2 INDIANA JONES
3 21
4 CARE GIVER

IMUS

1 CARE GIVER
2 IRON MAN
3 INDIANA JONES
4 21

ANGELES

1 INDIANA JONES
2 CARE GIVER
3 ASYLUM
4 21

STARMILLS

1 21
2 CARE GIVER
3 MEGA SNAKE
4 IRON MAN / INDIANA JONES
5 CARE GIVER
6 INDIANA JONES

BACOLOD

1 CARE GIVER
2 INDIANA JONES
3 WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS / CARE GIVER
4 21
5 ASYLUM
6 THE SAVAGES

ILOILO

1 INDIANA JONES
2 CARE GIVER
3 IRON MAN / CARE GIVER
4 21
5 PATHOLOGY
6 NEVER BACK DOWN

Red Carpet

61st Cannes Int'l Film Festival, France, May 14-25

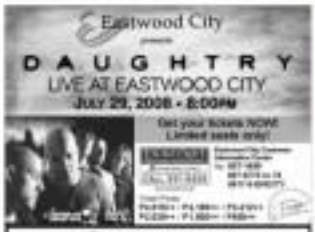
GWYNETH PALTROW

NOW SHOWING

ACTRESS Michelle Williams

NATALIE PORTMAN

ROSE McGOWAN



Eastwood Central Plaza
May 30, 2008 at 7:00 PM
Free admission

ACTRESS Sharon Stone

BURLESQUE artist Dita von Teese

CLASSIC white living room is born a touch of rock 'n' roll by son DJ's drum set.

WALL of fame: Framed photographs line the hallway.

WIDE-SCREEN TV is the focal point in the living room because they love watching movies, says Donna V.

Komiks *by design*

From page H1

pyramids.

Mirrors all over the living room are crystal parrots, horses, peacocks and other creatures—a virtual menagerie by Murano.

Several antique timepieces—including the Seasons Statues and Bacantes—are from Europe.

Ancient

The foyer features intricately decorated Chinese vases that are "hundreds of years old."

Donna V is especially fond of the colorful crystal chandeliers (circa 1930s) from France. "Instead of jewelry, I collect chandeliers, which are also good investments. They're made of Christ stones."

In daughter Stacie's redecorated sitting room, there's a "working" jukebox from abroad.

There's an eclectic, international feel to the place. "We're the Marco Polo family," Donna V quips.

The Caparasos have embarked on African safaris and scuba diving expeditions in the Tubbataha Marine Park.

They have "opposite" personalities, Donna V admits, but they share a passion for the sea.

ROMMEL SA

KOMIKS amateur pounding bronze mermaid statue: sculpture from Italy, above.

TWO of three puffer fish hangs in the patio, at right.

DAUGHTER Peachi's sitting room features red sofa and standing chandelier.

PAIR of golden peacock lamps, gifts from a friend.

JUKEBOX is part of Peachi's collection. It works, too!

HOW TO TURN PEPSI INTO A PSP

fig. 1

fig. 2

fig. 3

Win a PSP daily with Pepsi Everyday Magic at EK Promo!
From April 11 to June 8, simply buy any Pepsi product in an EK Tumbler for a chance to win a PSP at 9:30 p.m., or EK Day Passes at 6pm, 7pm, 8pm, and 8:45 p.m. Winners may claim their prizes immediately.
See posters for details.
Per DTI-Laguna Permit Number R-04-128, Series of 2008

Student's Discounted Rates
Students can avail of EK's Student Summer Entertainment Promo: only P270 on weekdays and P330 on weekends, plus get a Lipton Red Tea!
Promo runs from March 24 to June 7, 2008.
Per DTI-Laguna Permit Number R-05-043, Series of 2008

Park Schedule
March 24 - June 8: Mon-Fri - 2pm to 10pm
Sat, Sun & Holidays - 10am to 10pm
Fireworks on weekends and holidays at 9pm.

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Official Dairy
Official Meat
Official Seafood
Official Vegetables
Official Fruits
Official Nuts
Official Spices
Official Herbs
Official Oils
Official Vinegar
Official Sauces
Official Soups
Official Salads
Official Desserts
Official Pastries
Official Breakfast
Official Lunch
Official Dinner
Official Snacks
Official Beverages
Official Food
Official Drink
Official Meal
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Official Entertainment
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Official Googol
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Official Eternity
Official Universe
Official Multiverse
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Official Nothing
Official Void
Official Abyss
Official Chaos
Official Order
Official Balance
Official Harmony
Official Peace
Official Love
Official Hate
Official War
Official Death
Official Life
Official Birth
Official Rebirth
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Official Moksha
Official Samsara
Official Maya
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Official Softly
Official Loudly
Official Quietly
Official Silently
Official Noisily
Official Peacefully
Official Violently
Official Calmly
Official Excitedly
Official Boringly
Official Interestingly
Official Uninterestingly
Official Fascinatingly
Official Mundanely
Official Extraordinarily
Official Ordinarily
Official Unusually
Official Usually
Official Rarely
Official Often
Official Sometimes

SUZI ENTRATA-ABRERA

I LOVE OUR BEDROOM. THIS IS where we relax. The nude pencil sketch there is by Jun Aluenzuan, the uncle of my husband ("Hiro" Isaac Ibuis. Rivera). We acquired most of the paintings in our home by auction. My mother-in-law (Emily Abrera), her brother (Jon) and their friend Jaime de Guzman also gifted us with art pieces. We're lucky to have artist friends and relatives. I also love the garden. My kids and I have painting and coloring activities there. Or we just eat a meal and have picnics. (My "Young Hiro" co-host) Uncle Nigel gave me the Black bamboo and Buddha bamboo in the garden.

Raynard Jose Ibleza Jr.

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WEEKEND PICK-A-PRIZE
Watch SEX AND THE CITY
at Glorietta 4 cinemas on May 31 & June 1, 2008
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Diaries • Vinyl Bags • Mugs • Key Chains
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and many more

AGA Muhlach and wife Charlene Gonzalez

PRISCILLA Meirelles and John Estrada

KC Concepcion and grandmom Elaine

WHAT'S that question again? Mega meets the press.

Mega's big 'Caregiver' night

RICA PERALEJO

TO CELEBRATE HER RETURN TO TV8 HIT series after a four-year absence, Sharon Cuneta led the cast and crew in unveiling "Caregiver" in two packed cinemas in SM Megamall on Tuesday.

One theater was devoted to caregiver-students; the other, to Mega's celeb friends, along with family and fans.

After the screening, Mega and company trooped to Pub 1010 as host by Hellsing Inc. where they partied till the wee hours.

KAYAN ACBAYAN

KUMA Gutierrez and Annabelle Rama

AIAI HINA

KIDWELL Santiago, Marilou and Randy Santiago

ABS-CBN bosses Mayor Santos, Cory Vidanes and Charo Santos

POWER PLANT CINEMA

KIDDY HALL CENTER MALL

INDIANA JONES -G	INDIANA JONES -G	INDIANA JONES -G
CAREGIVER -G	21 -R13	SEX AND THE CITY -R13

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 Sex and the City
2 Indiana Jones 4
3 21
4 Caregiver
Indiana Jones 4

WOMEN OF ALLURE PHOTO EXHIBIT

Shangri-La Plaza

AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	SEX & THE CITY	INDIANA JONES	CAREGIVER	INDIANA JONES
GLORIETTA 4	INDIANA JONES	INDIANA JONES	SEX & THE CITY	
	INDIANA JONES	CAREGIVER	21	
GREENBELT 1	INDIANA JONES & THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL	SEX & THE CITY		
GREENBELT 3	SEX & THE CITY	21	INDIANA JONES & THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL	
	21	INDIANA JONES & THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL	SEX & THE CITY	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	SEX & THE CITY	CAREGIVER		
	21	INDIANA JONES	INDIANA JONES	
NINOY CENTER CEBU	SEX & THE CITY	CAREGIVER	21	INDIANA JONES
MARKET! MARKET!	CAREGIVER	SEX & THE CITY		
	21	INDIANA JONES	INDIANA JONES	
TRINOMA	CAREGIVER	21	INDIANA JONES	INDIANA JONES
	INDIANA JONES	SEX & THE CITY	SEX & THE CITY	

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — Treetopia Playgroup Workshop
April 2 – June 2, Glorietta Homewoon
For inquiries, pls. call Rina Regard at 7328531

Greenbelt — AFRO-BRAZILIAN Weekends at Greenbelt with movements, music and instruments
May 31, 7 PM, Greenbelt 3, 2nd level

Alabang Town Center — Summer Workshop: Clown Dance Classes
May 19 – June 1, 3 PM, Sports and Hobbies Facade

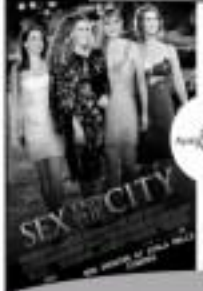
Ayala Center Cebu — Park and Shop Promo
May 15-31

Market! Market! — Asian Tropical Living : An Interior Design Exhibit
March – June 30, Home Market, 3rd Level

Cinta Gifts — Christmas - The perfect spot for concerts, stagelights & corporate events
In one accepting bookings for May to July 2008
For inquiries & bookings, pls. call 752.7862 or 757.2881

Ayala Museum — Bookings for 19th Century artist Simon Flores
ongoing until May 25, 2008
For more information, please call 757.7117 loc 21 local 20
or email marketing_mseum@yahoo.com.ph

Tri Noma — Philippine Star Job Fair
May 30-31, 10 AM - 8 PM, Activity Center



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Greenbelt

Glorietta · Greenbelt · Trinoma · Alabang Town Center · Ninoy Aquino International Airport · Market! Market!

IN WHAT he calls "War Room," Carlo J has displayed some awards, including two Parmai trophies and a Presidential medal of merit.

COLORFUL stained glass adds a burst of sophistication to this European-style sitting area.

FORMAL dining area in gold and red showcases a Zalamea painting as centerpiece.

GIANT shell in the garden hints slowly to ocean theme.

Komiks *by design*

From page 43

Apart from a large aquarium teeming with marine life (including fresh water shark), Donna V has displayed several signed fish figures, also by Montero, all over the house. Accentuating with these lavish and plush fishes is a colored dried puffer fish out in the patio.

By the pool, there's a bronze sculpture of a mermaid and mermaids from Italy.

"She's the mermaid; I'm the dyslexic (mermaid)," Carlo J jokes.

"When I was 14, I ran a fishing business," Donna V recounts. "That's how I learned to dive. I've always been comfortable in the water."

Carlo J grew up in Pasig, by the banks of the river immortalized by heroes and poets. "When I was young, my friends and I played patintero in the river," he recalled). "When Donna showed me the beaches in Cebu, her home province, I was enraptured."

It's thought he finally found home.

The couple dreams of retiring by the sea.

"I'm eyeing an island near Marinet," he says.

(E-mail: bgonzales@gmail-mail.com)

CHICUS carousel candleholders were bought from a local hobby house.

MURANO crystal vase

PLDT myDSL and PC Express to offer a desktop for only P13,000 at the Ultra Broadband Blowout event at the SM Mall Of Asia

This offer and hundreds of other top of the line notebooks, PCs and gadgets will be available at ultra low prices, some may even include free unlimited DSL for 1 year. Major credit cards and 0% installment schemes are available.

PLDT myDSL's Ultra Broadband Blowout - PLDT's biggest internet and PC event of the year kicking off at the main atrium of SM Mall Of Asia this Saturday, May 31 to June 1

SEA-LOVING couple made sure, of course, that their city home comes with a pool.

A SWEDISH artist crafted the Pleasantview art work made from baked porcelain.

ANTIQUE religious icons, including a prized Madonna and Child, came from Europe.

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bernie G. Yulo

All-Negrense film stars local cuisine

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—"IT'S THE most Negrense film I have ever known."

This is how Negrense director Jay Abello describes the independently produced digital movie, "Pamana?," which he is currently shooting in Negros Occidental.

This is a movie in which the main character is the food of the Visayan province—and the dialog is in Hiligaynon, notes Abello.

Hollywood-only in Negros Occidental, with Negrenses comprising more than 95 percent of the cast and crew.

Delicious!

"Pamana?" is a colorful celebration of love as well as food ... and the love will be delicious all, whether natural to being Negrenseor and being Filipino," says Balance thread. winner Vicente Gaspay, who wrote the script.

Abello is from Silay City, known for its various month-winning delicacies. He points out that the film revolves around food in Negros and this, he says, necessarily allows people to love.

"Pamana?" (Inheritance in Tagalog) tells the story of Jacko (Christian Vasquez) and Cande (Angel Jacob), two thefs who grow up in Bacolod.

Trouble starts when Jacko loses his father, Tomcruise, (Perchell), to pay off a huge gambling debt. The moneylender Dolpo (played by renowned Negrense filmmaker Hupa Gallaga) takes control of Perchl's and Nora Cande as consultant for a total restaurant makeover.

"Pamana?" premieres at the 2008 Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival, which will be held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines from July 11 to 20. A week-long screening at the University of the Philippines Diliman Film Center follows, and then a regular run in Ayala Marcilla Cinemas.

The film will have its Visayan premiere at the SM Cinema in Bacolod City in mid-August, before going on a nationwide campaign tour, Abello said.

The cast includes actors with theatrical roots, such as Raquel Gallaga, Menyong and Tessie Tomas and Dwight Cervas, local theater talents mixed up the film.

THE PEVENSIES ARE BACK

The Pevensie siblings return to the big screen, with a Prince this time around, in "The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian." The stars (from left) Georgie Henley, William Moseley, newcomer Ben Barnes (in the title role), Anna Popplewell and Skandar Keynes. Only in Hollywood, page 12.

Cheer Factor

Soprano charity

NEW YORK—TONY Soprano is shedding his wardrobe for charity. James Gandolfini, star of the hit TV series about a Mafia family, is selling off 24 outfits that he wore in the show. Proceeds expected of $50,000 from the June 25 auction at Christie's will go to the Wounded Warrior Project, a nonprofit group that assists severely wounded soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. AP

Did You Know...

Penn puffs

CANNES, FRANCE—Disregarding France's tough new anti-smoking laws yet again, Sean Penn lit up Sunday on the staircase Palais d'Or jury met the press following Cannes' closing awards ties. Penn, French actress Jeanne Balibar and Iranian comic-book author and director Marjane Satrapi happily puffed away as they took questions about their 12-day work watching the 20 films in competition. It seemed a replay of the jury's opening conference, when Penn led a minor revolt against the draconian anti-smoking laws brought in this year. AFP

'Narnia' actor reveals 'bizarre' fan mail; actress is in Oxford

WILLIAM Moseley (left, on turning over the road to her son to Ben Barnes, right, who stars in the next instalment after "The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian"). "I love ready to pass it on to Ben and see what he's got in store, and he has to anchor and lead the films."

LOS ANGELES—William Moseley, who makes his last appearance as Peter Pevensie in "The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian," says some "bizarre" fan mail (read on). Anna Popplewell (Susan Pevensie) is enrolled at Oxford, where C.S. Lewis, who wrote the "Narnia" books, taught for over 20 years.

Those were some of the updates shared with us by the male cast of the blockbuster adventure during films interviews in New York. What a difference a few years can make. When we first talked with Moseley, Anna, Georgie Henley (Lucy) and Skandar Keynes (Edmund) in 2000 for "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," they were, understandably, shy and awkward at the press cons. They spoke softly and gave short answers.

Flash forward to 2008—Moseley (21), Henley (19) and Georgie (12) were mediated, answered questions while smiling, and in unison loud enough for all the reporters in town in place of Skandar, our lead, the very interesting Peter Dinklage, the diminutive actor in the brilliant "The Station Agent," who plays the lovely Trumpkin the Red Dwarf in "Prince Caspian."

Filming this second "Narnia"—directed again by Andrew Adamson—was less tumultuous for William and Anna because they are not returning in the next installment, "The Voyage of the Dawn Treader." William is particularly pissing on the passed to Ben Barnes, who is the Prince Caspian in the film, and who gets to give more for first scenes him. All this happens when the Pevensie children are unexpectedly back to the mystical land of Narnia and discover that the kingdom is overrun by Telmarines and a cruel tyrant.

Only in Hollywood

Andrew V. Nepales

...and other updates on the main cast of hit film series

Magic, spectacle

Along the way, there are spectacular battles, magical landscapes and cute animals. Besiegings (we stated Andrew that this current reminds us of Ambrose Bierce's' Pale 'n' Boots in "Shrek," which Andrew also directed). Trolls, bears, a badger, and Aslan, a lion, and, lastly, Ben.

Georgie, Skandar and Peter get a chance to shine on their own in the third "Narnia," which is to start filming later this year.

William and Georgie, who were paired in the interview, were like real siblings in their easy banter. Here's what the brother and sister some of his fan mail. "I've had some bizarre fan mail, in my the least. I've had fan mail from different parts of the world and different types of people—from girls who sent half-naked pictures of themselves, to men, you know, offering me a holiday in the Bahamas. I really find it fascinating to read fan mail. It shows that the first film appealed to a broad spectrum of people. I think [more] will come to seem [because of the sons] film."

Brian Cox is building resumes between Prince Narnia and Lucy William was asked for an update on someone in his own life. He answered in a refreshing way: "Narnia' has opened my eyes to a lot of things. I feel lucky that I'm able to travel, live not stuck in my hometown, meet the same kind of girls and guys who I've been going to school with for years. There are so many interesting, intelligent girls out there."

Eye-opening

Georgie, with a naughty glint in her eyes, answered in one word and repeated it, drawing laughter from the reporters: "Intelligent." William could only smile back in brotherly amusement. "It has definitely been a roller coaster ride in that department," he quipped. Named for a gentle answer, William finally admitted, "There is someone special but I'm not going to say for her future that."

Ben knew he was rumored since he was cast in the first film, William replied. "It was an eye-opening experience, to say the least. I was essentially playing myself. But by the end of the filming, my character grew from a boy into a man. In my own experience, I also matured greatly. In the second 'Narnia,' my character is much darker. He is more experienced and a lot angrier. I had to get in touch with a lot of the dark parts of my personality, and that made me even more anxious. From the time I was cast to the present, I have grown into my roles even more."

But last year, Georgie said, "When I first auditioned, I was 7 years old. I had to do another school [audition] record. I had that meeting and which member of my family I would run first if we were stranded on an island [laughter]. Being around older people on the set was a good thing." Laughing, she said, "I am mature for my age but I'm still very naive sometimes."

Defining his final "Narnia" movie, William figures to stretching fight scenes. He mentions particularly challenging ones: "I have a fight scene with Steph Cardiffe, the wonderful actor who plays Miraz and whom I have a lot of respect for. At first, when the fight scene was being choreographed, a lot of it was done by stunt doubles. And then Steph came in and did some of the fight. I didn't think he would be that good. He's kind of a small man. I didn't think much was going to happen. He's always joking and laughing.

"But when we did the scene, his eyes lit up. He came down hard on me and he just kept going. I was ducking and diving all over. Andrew called 'Cut' and he's like, 'That was great.' Andrew asked me, 'Would you like more of those?' I was like, 'Andrew, that was real. Steph—was really trying to kill me!' [Laughter.] I was thinking, it was definitely scary; it really made me have a lot of respect for Steph."

Emotional place

William spoke wistfully as he reflected on his survival and how "Narnia" parole: "Narnia' has been my life for six years. I started auditioning at 15. Now I'm 21, so 'Narnia' has a really emotional place for me. It's not just a film or a job. It's so much more than that to me, so passing it on to Ben Barnes] is a sad thing. But it's also a hopeful thing. I'm ready for a new challenge as an actor. I am ready to pass it on to Ben and see what he's got in store and for him to anchor and lead the films. I'm really for something maybe a little bit more in the real world." With his handsome good looks, William should have no trouble finding roles in that regard.

Georgie, on the other hand, sounded excited about being in the third installment, to be directed by Michael Apted. "It's really looking forward to doing the next film," she gushed. "Voyage of the Dawn Treader' is my favorite book in the 'Narnia' series. I don't say that in a mean way but I feel that Lucy and I scrutinized by her sister anymore. The same with Edmund. Lucy comes into her own more than she has in the first two films so I'm really looking forward to portraying that."

Oddkins

Anna, who was paired with Peter in the press con, was asked about her first screen kiss, and with Prince Caspian, no less. She confessed, "I was quite nervous because not only had I known Ben for five months already—it's always odd kissing a friend—there was an audience of actors watching. We were on top of a platform. It really couldn't have been more of a show."

She added, "It was especially nerve-wracking having Skandar, Will and Georgie there. They are like my surrogate sister and brothers. All were freaking nervous and I had my brother or sister standing there. I'd be very nervous for this filming scene since first. But it great. He was very professional about it."

Since a lot of the spectacular visual effects were done through CGI, Anna and Peter discussed having to say opposite tennis balls to represent the computer-generated characters that were added later to the cameras. "Some tennis balls are better actors than some human actors," Peter joked.

"Some of the tennis balls are," Anna jokingly agreed to laughter from the journalists. "It's always a challenge to act to things that are not there."

The English Literature student explained why the series is successful: "One of the strengths of the Narnia stories is that they're not a sequential franchise, that of the reason why the books are so popular is that you have recurring characters and new ones every time. So you're seeing some of the same people in completely new situations. Aslan [the lion considered by many as the series' Christ figure] is the only character who's in all the books. The fact that it appeals as well to the diversity is that it's a very human story—it's very much about family dynamics. Whether you're an only child or you have brothers and sisters, the humanness of the stories is something that everyone can relate to."

Of her other life as a university student, she confessed, "Yes, I'm at Magdalen College in Oxford; C.S. Lewis taught there for 26 years. I just started in October. It's overpowering. We have only been long lectures at Oxford so I'm hoping to do something this summer. I'd like to continue acting but I see it as a long-term career. I'd like to act for 25 years, not five years, so I'm reading the time now to earn my degree."

Poignant

Like Will, she pounded poignant when she talked about her last "Narnia" gig: "The last few shooting days were really sad. It was quite a bittersweet finish for Will and me, but at the same time I feel that I've learned a huge amount from doing these movies. But I'm ready to move on and do other things. I don't think I would want to play the same character seven times."

E-mail the columnist at rnepales2000@yahoo.com and read his blog, "The Hipster Report," on http://blogs.inquirer.net/vapalmreport.

REVIEW

Candy-colored car caper

By Oliver M. Palomhark
Contributor

RUSHING WITH CHEEKY COLORS AND IRRESISTIBLY artificial-looking, "Speed Racer" is a big popcorn movie revolving around racing and the cars that, strangely but some, produce racing. Directed by the Wachowski siblings Andy and Larry Wachowski ("The Matrix") offer their take on the beloved '60s cartoon series, a fun and engaging enough new world that's drenched in trippy special effects and made lively by hyperactive cinematography.

But there some when things slow down, particularly when technically-friendly drama hits turn sappy and clichéd. Less than it's entirely the visual development of the main here. Speed Racer (Emile Hirsch) is done unfortunately, his childhood memories imaginatively exercised together with his proven-day anger and brooding personality. The flashbacks are creatively presented on the screen, comic book-like in its utilization of foreground and background imagery.

Speed Racer's co-producers are oddly cast family: the Racers, whose love for racing, and cars is established early on and repeatedly. Pops (John Goodman) makes the mistakes, famer automobiles in his garage, while Mom (Susan Sarandon) is ever supportive of the guys and son, handle anything with her expertise in diplomacy, cooking pancakes and making sandwiches. Sporty Double Trix, Speed's younger brother, is the in-quirk his loyal fan.

Speed's hero-worship of a deceased older brother and racing champ, Rex (Scott Porter), drives him to compete. The promising driver attracts the attention of Royalton Industries' head honcho Roger Allard, who tries to lure the young man into joining his roster of "thoroughbreds." Speed politely declines, preferring to stay independent. Subsequently, the naïve driver discovers some dishonesty in the business, and Speed and those close to him become victims of corporate skullduggery.

Still, it's about 10 minutes too long. The flashy racing heats, however, are a media-mix of cool treat, including one in the Casablanca International Pool Race in "Time Vibes Episode 1."

The cunning cars on hazardous tracks are quite a sight but the races soon become unwieldy. The special effects are something to admire, making the impossible incredibly real, even when laws-paced scenes or tedious cerebral background only dilute the laws of physics.

The humor is mild, but your kid companion will undoubtedly get it and enjoy it. Despite some screeching moments, "Speed Racer" is still worth seeing. But don't rush.

'Stage parents' issue raises its pointy head again

Nestor U. Torre

WHEN DAVID ARCHULETA'S "Faulkner" blind-manager] was recently signed for boasting shows too severely on his "American Idol" finalist run, show-initiated TV programs revived the always controversial issue of stressed-out stage parents" for its latest skirting—and stumbling.

Excessively manipulative parent managers are deemed "dangerous" to their children's physical and psychological health (probably because the talents involved are relatively defenseless and vulnerable minors).

As the flap over young Archuleta's dad shows, the problem keeps creeping its pokey head in show business—for various reasons. Some stage parents are failed star wannabes who try to relive their dreams through their children, especially when the kids themselves aren't too keen on becoming performers.

It gets worse when some stage parents force their kids on because the family breadwinners, while showbiz and Daddy (not to mention Lola and Boys and Tita and cousin Bruno!) live the good life off their talents.

Worst of all, some stage parents squander their kids' earnings, neglect their education and work them to the bone—even as the "dependents" heat up like pinky pigs.

More and pop 'monsters'

It's our setting-shooting-producing source, we're concerned some more and pop "monsters" who've shocked us with their blithe exploitation of their own flesh and blood.

A popular child star we once worked with excitedly confided to us that her fat-ass pigs family refused to allow her to stop playing kiddie roles, even if she was 15 years old and already had her period. They kept feeding her off as a 10-year-old to their total sleep-making money for them.

Another entertainer performer, only 14 years old at the time, was forced by her mother to audition for a rather sexy show we did, and we were shocked to see someone so obviously young being made to do so—by her own mother, at that. We put a stop to the "sexy" routine and chided the girl's mother. Years later, the 14-year-old girl became a star, but she was already old enough to make up her own mind about the roles she chose to play.

Yet another unbelievable talent variety is a big name who has been forced to work her hand for a number of years, because her folks want her to maximize her income-generation potential "while the show biz can draw." The tragedy is, the young talent used to have a fine singing voice, but her excessively rigorous work schedule and all-night sleepless nights have caused her vocal instrument, and maybe her mother, irreparably dodgy.

The three young "stars" released and abused" talents we've mentioned are all female—but this doesn't mean that young male talent have an easy time of it. Quite a number of them are seduced or compelled to take the quick route to stardom by agreeing to become the "boy toys" of power players or backers in the biz.

Bikini Showdown

CUBA Libre this recently staged the fantasy Wave competition for Starmalls Insurance Bikini Showdown 2008.

Nine sexy ladies and 11 cruelest were participated. The Bikini showdown's grand finals was held last night at Gawisali Alabang.

'Dancelarong Bayan'

"Dancelarong Bayan," the popular public affairs program, tabloid Joe Taruc has anchored, were shifted for many years, can now be seen on TV from Monday through Saturday, 7-8 a.m., over Channel 67's RJG Radyo Bulan.

Karen Gallo joins "Morning Joe" in disrupting the former's years of the day in a light vein. BETTY Radyo Veloso are on cable channel's newest partnership programs of the Manila Broadcasting Company and CableTV of Infocom Technologies Inc., a subsidiary of PLDT.

Comic book hero

By Jerome S. Lobrera
Contributor

ONE of his early published works, "Valor."

BOBI SANTIAGO. The late Francisco V. Coching is his favorite idol.

ROBERT PAZELLA AS "BAD BOY" Brian Dennehy as "Ang Bahong Sinumpaan sa Sarili." Dolphy as "Kino Dinero." Raymart Santiago as "Magsong Bebas." Monsour del Rosario as "Walang Aatras." Rita Avila as "Wala sa Isip."

What do they have in common? The comics creator-turned-movies were crafted by komiks writer-illustrator and screenwriter Nel Santiago.

Santiago, who started as an illustrator, got his big break in 1968 when Tony Velasquez, known as the father of Pinoy Komiks, recommended him for work with Mars Ravelo, another top guy.

"Competition was tough," Santiago says, recalling the time when the komiks was the most popular pastime for the masses, and the better illustrators were Nestor Redondo, Alfredo Alcala, Fred Carillo, Rosy de Xalligo, Jesse Santos and Nick Pascual. Also, Santiago says, Francisco Coching, King of Komiks Illustrators, is his foremost idol.

Revival

With other writers and illustrators, Santiago is pushing for the revival of the komiks industry through Carlo J. Caparas' partnership with Omelian Publishing, which has produced the newly launched Klasik Komiks, DZW Super Stories, Super Funny Stories and Classic Komiks. Santiago's new stories and illustrations appear in all four.

As writer-illustrator, Santiago penned "Batman," "Sitio ni Satan," "Ito Akma" and "Alamat" for Higa Komiks; "Wedding Bell" for Imperial Komiks; "The Mantis," "Ring of the Gatchs," "Kaptan Aksyon" and "Ang Bahong Sinumpaan sa Sarili" for Hiwaga Komiks; "Agos-Gonzales," "Pugad ng Demonyo" and "Pinchenong Iron" for Liwayway Magazine.

He collaborated with other illustrators in "The Couple," "The Slayer," "Mama sa Isla," "I Love You Josephine," "Ang Dio at Isabella," "Ahoosa," "Ongong, Ulilang Anghel sa Ilalim," "Bobby Wood," "Lawin ng Cordillera," "Hiperia Ka Ba Lang, Pilipili Ka Ako," "Bad Boy" "Singsong Aetas," "Mga Birheo ng Dimira," "Shigeon (Anak ng Vulcan)," "Baharal Jack" and other komiks novels. His most work, "Di Pahalagang," became a top-rated radio serial in 1984-86.

The artist claims he works best in the basement of his house, but he also goes out to find fresh ideas. Once, while developing the character of a suspense-horror, he barricaded women who wanted to hate to have a better understanding of that work.

Universal theme

Santiago believes some stories write themselves. "I have my characters who take hold of their own stories as that, as a writer. I stop describing their fate. In a way, I just become the narrator."

As a matter of course, Santiago says, he uses characters that reflect Filipino values, such as diligence, perseverance and love for family. Most of his stories explore the universal theme of good battling, and winning over, evil.

Asked which is easier, writing or illustrating, he replies: "When I was just an illustrator, I thought it was more difficult. When I started to write, I realized that was more difficult. It's like making music—the composer is the writer and the singer is the illustrator."

Santiago is currently working on a fantasy-horror telenovela that he hopes to be produced this year. In 2006, ABS-CBN's fantasy-drama series "Komiks" adapted his comedy "Agua Bendita," "Vicenta," "Kamukha si Santiago," "Ina ni Inbella," "Kaptan Aksyon" and "Vulcan 5."

Santiago, 62, also dabbles in painting and enjoys reading the Bible. But he's still best on doing what he knew most: "It's always satisfying to improving my art," he says. "I keep in mind what Confucius said: 'Choose a job you love, and you never have to work a day of your life.'"

He can't get enough of what he does, Santiago says.

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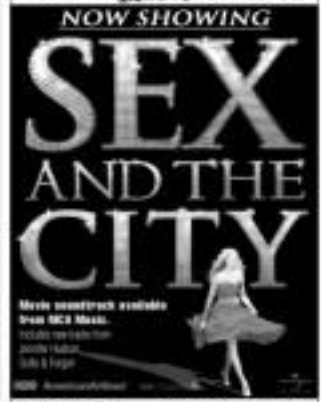

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DID YOU KNOW...

LOS ANGELES—JOSEPH SIRRH SAYS HE BECAME "PANICKY" when his new Double-wing wings design. In the July/August issue of AARP The Magazine, Sirrh, 67, relates how he intervened to save his seven sons: "He'd skipped out of the hospital and I had to pay the bill. I got to see why he was in there. That's what I took to be cute; it was the only way I got him." Martin-author backed actor-fashion himself. Chaplin, 42, seen in "Two and a Half Men." AP

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UNMASK THE NEW EVIL.

The Chronicles of NARNIA
PRINCE CASPIAN
IN CINEMAS JUNE 4

Distributed by WALT DISNEY through Columbia Pictures International Inc.

PLDT MyDSL Speed Circuit's Second Car Drifting Leg Scorches Greenhills

The Biggest Internet and PC Event of the Year Unveiled

PLDT myDSL 1st drifting competition, May 24 Greenhills parking lot. Drifting-driving champs: 1st place Kevin Tayao, 1st runner up Alex Perez and 2nd runner up Brian Rodriguez with Nancy Jane Castiglione

The second leg of the PLDT MyDSL car-drifting competition finished up Saturday at the Greenhills Shopping Center open parking area. Drift car enthusiasts, professionals, and even some geisy celebrities like Ryan Agoncillo and Brian Revilla took behind the wheel and the streets to drift the tight-cornered course. One lucky spectator will be winning a brand new drift car on June 28 when the PLDT myDSL Speed Circuit Tour returns in Greenhills Promenade.

Amidst the speed and throttle, PLDT myDSL kicked off the Ultra Broadband Blowout, the biggest Internet and PC event of the year, showing top PC makers PC Express, Complink and Villman. A scrupulous array of top PC brands will be available at Ultra Broadband Blowout rates. Get a brand new desktop PC for as low as P9,000, or a laptop at P12,000 only at the Ultra Broadband blow out event, which will be launched at the SM Mall of Asia from May 31 to June 1. Top laptops still even include FREE unlimited MyDSL for one year! Major credit cards and 0% installment schemes are available.

This highly anticipated event will also hit SM North EDSA on June 13-15 and SM Megamall on June 27-29.

PLDT myDSL is available near the counter of SM Department stores and top PC and cellphone shops nationwide. Customers can now get myDSL near the counter of these accredited partners and enjoy Internet activation in as quick as 24 hours.

With the myDSL Speed Circuit car drifting events and now the Ultra Broadband Blowout event, myDSL is truly at the forefront of innovation.

Villman's President & CEO Boyd Villamarin with the PLDT myDSL crew led by Category Head, Mr. Gary Dagot.

VP for operations Jesús Ibo shows PC Express' P12,000 desktop package for Ultra Broadband Blowout Sale.

Complink GM, Jerry Mangubat's Nancy Jane Castiglione for PLDT myDSL

SM Babes pose with the myDSL Car

Series and Car-drifter Ryan Agoncillo posing the motor

PLDT myDSL's Ultra Broadband Blowout - PLDT's biggest internet and PC event of the year kicking off at the main atrium of SM Mall Of Asia this Saturday, May 31 to June 1